

**THE EXPLANATION OF  
THE HOLY GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO MARK**

by Blessed Theophylact,  
Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

Translated from the original Greek  
by Fr. Christopher Stade

Volume II in the series:  
**Blessed Theophylact's Explanation  
of the New Testament**

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## *Contents*

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## Introduction

The book in hand, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark*, is the second volume in our translation from the Greek of the commentaries by Blessed Theophylact on the books of the New Testament. It follows in design the first volume, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*, published in 1992.

The translation has been made from the original Greek text of Migne, vol. 123 in the series *Patrologia Graeca*. The English text of the Gospel itself is for the most part that of the King James Version. We have revised that text in a few places to reflect patristic Orthodox interpretation and usage, and to avoid a few Elizabethan English expressions which are at the greatest risk of being unintelligible to the contemporary reader. Quotations from the Old Testament used by Bl. Theophylact in his *Explanation* are taken from Sir Lancelot Brenton's translation of the Septuagint,<sup>1</sup> except that quotations from the Psalms are taken from the *Psalter According to the Seventy*.<sup>2</sup> Square brackets within the text of the *Explanation* indicate a clarifying word or phrase added by the translator; text within parentheses is always Bl. Theophylact himself.

The author of this remarkable commentary is an eleventh century Byzantine churchman of great learning and piety, who served in Constantinople as a royal tutor, archdeacon, renowned preacher of the Gospel, and assistant to the Patriarch. About the year 1090 A.D. he obediently, though with reluctance, left behind this period of his life to travel to the distant city of Ochrid, the capital of the Bulgarian kingdom, to serve as Archbishop and chief hierarch of the Bulgarian Church. It was there, in the southwestern Balkans, that he wrote these commentaries, restating in simple and profound language that which has always and everywhere been taught by the fathers of the Church concerning the meaning of the Holy Gospel and Epistles. A fuller account of Bl. Theophylact's life, his writings, and his influence in both the East and the West, is to be found in the Introduction to the first volume of this series, *The Explanation of St. Matthew's Gospel*.

The passage of a year since the publication of the first volume has

<sup>1</sup> *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton, Samuel Bagster and Sons, London, 1851, reprinted, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, (1988).

<sup>2</sup> *The Psalter According to the Seventy*, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, Massachusetts, 1987.

been marked by the repose of Hieromonk Kallistos, who encouraged this undertaking from the outset. May God grant him rest and MEMORY ETERNAL! I also ask your prayers for us, the translator and editors of this work, and beg your indulgence for any of its shortcomings. The translation of the third volume, *The Explanation of St. Luke's Gospel*, is in progress, and should be available, God willing, in late 1994.

Fr. Christopher Stade  
August 13/26, 1993  
Apodosis of Transfiguration

### *How Should One Read or Listen to the Sacred Scriptures?<sup>1</sup>*

How should one read the sacred Scriptures? Or, if one does not do the reading himself, how ought he to listen to the reading of the sacred Scriptures? It is essential to be aware that in reading or listening with a proper disposition, one receives the fruit of salvation from his reading or listening; on the other hand, if one reads or listens to the sacred Scriptures in an improper manner, one brings harm upon the soul instead of the benefit of salvation.

One ought to read or listen to the sacred Scriptures, in that they are the word of God, with reverence and with prayer to God that He grant the grace of understanding. Since the sacred Scriptures were written down under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, we can understand them correctly only with the assistance of the Spirit of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" the apostle Paul teaches, "for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

By "natural man" the apostle means one who does not have the Spirit of God within him, but judges spiritual things by the understanding of his reason, without submitting himself to faith. Just as, in the visible world, we cannot see and recognize external objects if the light of the sun does not shine and show them to us, so also, in the spiritual life, we can understand and perceive spiritual subjects only in the light of the Spirit of God. Our mind can only comprehend divine teaching when the grace of the Holy Spirit enlightens it.

Therefore, in approaching the reading or hearing of the sacred Scriptures, we must entreat God with reverence, that He illumine our mind with the grace of His Spirit and grant that we may understand the teaching of the word of God, unto our edification.

That our reverence before God may be genuine and our prayer earnest, we must possess sincere humility in our soul, that we may read or listen to the sacred Scriptures with the heartfelt desire to derive from them instruction in the Faith and the incentive to live a pious and virtuous life.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an anonymous article, probably written by an Orthodox bishop in pre-revolutionary Russia. It was first translated into English by Isaac Lambertson and published in a bi-lingual booklet entitled *Evangeliskiya Chteniya—Gospel Readings*, St. Alexander Nevsky Church, Howell, New Jersey. Second edition, 1993. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of Fr. Vatery Lukianov.

God has given us His word, not for us merely to acquaint ourselves with divine teaching out of curiosity, and not that, having acquired an understanding of the sublime truths of that teaching, we may take pride in them as our personal treasure. This would be a misuse of the divine gift and a sin which is offensive to God. God has given us the sacred Scriptures that we may employ them for the salvation of our souls, unto the glory of His name. God reveals the knowledge of the truths of salvation only to the humble, while He hides them from the proud, as the Saviour, glorifying the heavenly Father, says: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Mt. 11:25), that is, to those who listen to the word of God with child-like humility and simplicity. The apostle Peter teaches: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I Pet. 5:5).

One must understand the sacred Scriptures as the Holy Church explains them, and as the holy fathers and teachers of the Church understood them. When one reads the word of God attentively and reverently, there will be much therein which is clear and understandable, yet you will also find much that is not easily comprehended. Concerning that which is not clear and understandable to you, ask the pastors and teachers of the Church, but do not take it upon yourself to interpret it in the way it appears to you.

In reading or listening to the sacred Scriptures one ought not to desire to understand everything that is said there; rather, it is necessary to take unto one's edification, with reverence and thankfulness to the all-good heavenly Father, that which is accessible to our understanding, under the guidance of the Holy Church. In the word of God there are many mysteries which are inaccessible to man's understanding. The word of God, like a spiritual light, reveals to us the invisible, spiritual world.

Just as in this world, which lies spread out before us, we see and understand only a little, only a portion; we see only what is around us, and even then only the external aspect of things, while what is within, we do not see. In the sky we see the sun, the moon and the stars, but what exactly are these luminaries? What is on them? What is inside them? This we do not see. Thus it is also in the word of God: spiritual subjects are only partly revealed to us, and we understand them only in part; but beyond them there is the unbounded expanse of that which is hidden. Be not troubled in mind over what is unattainable, but give thanks unto God

for what is revealed to you.

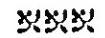
When a man standing in a river thirsts, he need not drink the whole river. It is enough for him to drink only so much water as is necessary to quench his thirst. Thus also it is not necessary for you to know everything or even to know a great deal; but it is necessary for you to know what is essential for your salvation.

Our Lord and Saviour says: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Lk. 11:28). Blessed are they who listen to the teaching of the word of God with reverence and submit to it, keeping it in their thoughts, desires, words, and deeds, and who strive, both openly and secretly, to serve the Lord God, ever fulfilling His commandments. And blessed will you be also, if you strive to listen to the word of God and to keep the commandments of God. You will be blessed because even on earth you will live with God, and beyond the grave eternal rewards will await you in the mansions of heaven, where you will be everlasting blessed, glorifying God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

\*



PRAYER OF THE HOLY HIERARCH  
JOHN CHRYSOSTOM BEFORE READING OR  
LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD



O Lord Jesus Christ, open Thou the eyes of my heart, that I may hear Thy word and understand and do Thy will, for I am a sojourner upon the earth. Hide not Thy commandments from me, but open mine eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Thy law. Speak unto me the hidden and secret things of Thy wisdom. On Thee do I set my hope, O my God, that Thou shalt enlighten my mind and understanding with the light of Thy knowledge, not only to cherish those things which are written, but to do them; that in reading the lives and sayings of the saints I may not sin, but that such may serve for my restoration, enlightenment and sanctification, for the salvation of my soul, and the inheritance of life everlasting. For Thou art the enlightenment of those who lie in darkness, and from Thee cometh every good deed and every gift. Amen.

## *The Life of the Evangelist Mark According to Sophronius<sup>1</sup>*

Mark was the disciple and interpreter of Peter, and, at the urging of the brethren in Rome, Mark wrote his short Gospel, following exactly what he had heard Peter tell. When Peter saw it, he gave it his approval, and directed that it be read in the Church, as Clement says in Book VI of his *Outlines*.<sup>2</sup> Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, makes mention of this same Mark.<sup>3</sup> Peter, in his first Epistle, refers to Rome metaphorically by the name "Babylon": "The church that is at Babylon, chosen together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Mark my son."<sup>4</sup> Taking with him the Gospel which he himself had written, Mark went to Egypt, and was the first to preach Jesus Christ in Alexandria, where he established the Church. So highly did he excel both in teaching and in a life of steadfast endurance, that all those who came to believe in Christ, followed his example. And Philo, the most eloquent of the Jews,<sup>5</sup> was so impressed when he saw the first church in Alexandria while it was still made up primarily of Jews, that he wrote a book about the life of those Christians, praising, as it were, his own race. Luke relates that the believers in Jerusalem held everything in common;<sup>6</sup> likewise Philo preserved the memory of what he had seen occurring in Alexandria under the guidance of Mark.<sup>7</sup> Mark reposed in the eighth year of Nero's reign [63 A.D.]. He was buried in Alexandria, where Ananias succeeded him as bishop.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This brief *Life* is traditionally included in the introductory sections of the liturgical Gospels of the Orthodox Church in Greek and Church Slavonic; hence it is included also with the commentaries on the Gospels by St. Theophylact. St. Sophronius I was Patriarch of Jerusalem (634-638) and as a patristic writer is also known as Sophronius the Sophist. His extant writings, including liturgical hymns, poetry, accounts of lives and miracles of the saints, and dogmatic works, have been published in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 87, columns 3147-4012. He is also co-author, with John Moschus, of the *Lemonarium*, a classical collection of accounts of the ancient desert fathers.

<sup>2</sup> See Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, Bk. II, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Bk. III, 39.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. 5:13

<sup>5</sup> An Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, c.20 B.C.-c.50 A.D.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 2:44-45

<sup>7</sup> For an account of Philo's description of the early Christian community in Egypt, see Eusebius, op. cit., Bk. I, 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Bk. I, 24.

## *Preface by Blessed Theophylact*

The Gospel According to St. Mark was written ten years after the Ascension of Christ. This Mark was a disciple of Peter, whom Peter calls his son, that is, his spiritual son. He was also called John,<sup>1</sup> and the nephew of Barnabas,<sup>2</sup> and the companion of Paul.<sup>3</sup> But eventually he accompanied Peter the most, and was with him in Rome. The believers in Rome begged Mark not only to preach orally, but also to give them a written account of Christ's life. He agreed, and composed it immediately. God revealed to Peter that Mark had written this Gospel, and when he saw it, Peter confirmed its truth, and sent Mark as bishop to Egypt. There Mark preached and established the Church in Alexandria, enlightening all those in that sunny land to the south. The character of this Gospel, therefore, is unclouded and clear, containing nothing that is hidden. Mark's Gospel agrees with Matthew's in every respect, except that Matthew goes into greater detail. And while Matthew begins with the Nativity of the Lord according to the flesh, Mark begins with the prophet and forerunner John. Therefore, though it may appear incomprehensible, some have given this understanding of the four evangelists: God, Who sits upon the four-faced Cherubim, as Scripture says,<sup>4</sup> gave us the Gospel which likewise appears in four forms, but is held together by one Spirit. Just as one of the Cherubim had the face of a lion, and another the face of a man, and another the face of an eagle, and another the face of a bullock, so it is with the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel of John has the face of a lion, for the lion is royal and princely; and John began his Gospel with the royal and lordly dignity of the divine Word, saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." But the Gospel of Matthew is in the likeness of a man, for it begins with the Nativity according to the flesh and the incarnation of the Word. The Gospel of Mark is likened to an eagle, for it begins with the prophet and forerunner John. And the prophetic gift, by which one can foresee and keenly perceive things that are a great way off, is like an eagle. For it is said that the eagle is the most keen sighted of all the animals, and can even gaze at the sun without shutting its eyes. The Gospel of Luke is like the

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 12:12

<sup>2</sup> Col. 4:10

<sup>3</sup> Philem. 24

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 1:10 and 10:14. See also Rev. 4:7.

bullock, because it begins with the priestly service of Zacharias, in the course of which he made sacrifice for the sins of the people, sacrificing a bullock. But Mark begins his Gospel by describing the way of life of the Forerunner. Listen then to what he says.

## THE EXPLANATION

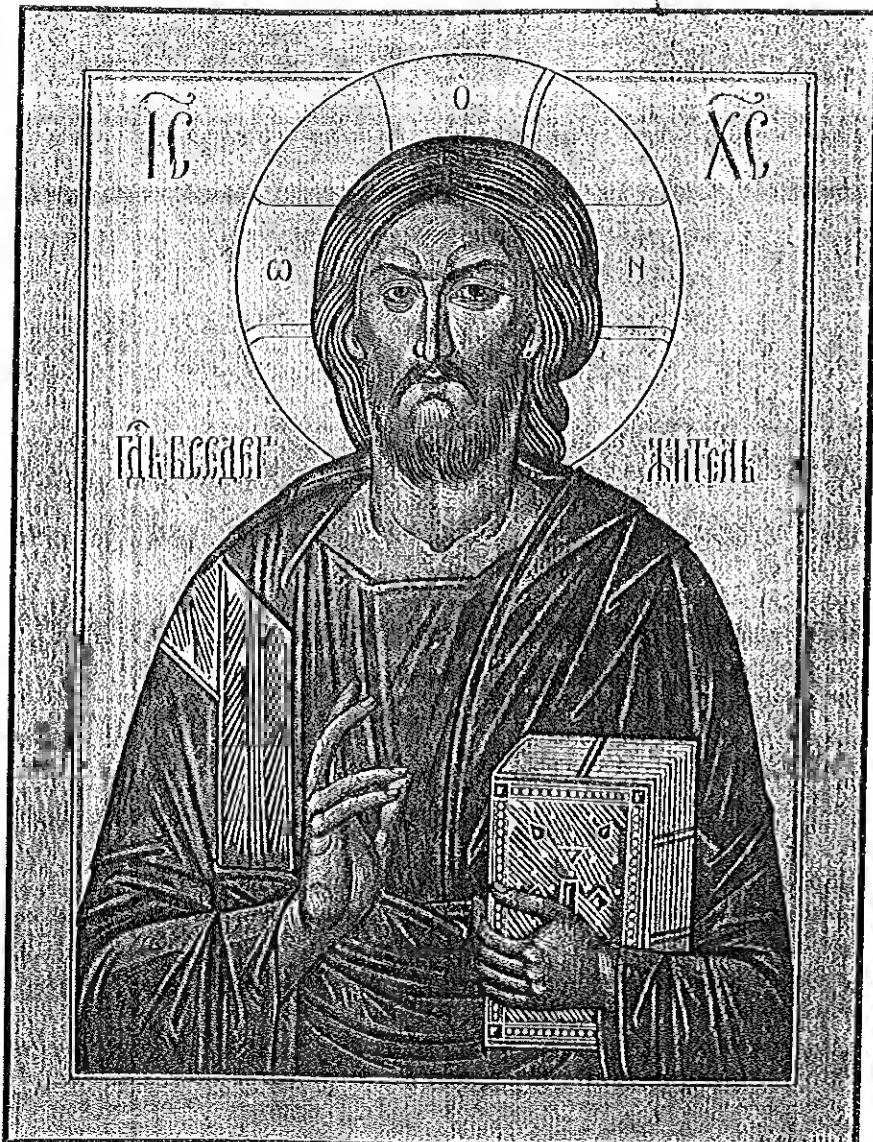
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BLESSED THEOPHYLACT

of

THE HOLY GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO  
ST. MARK

## CHAPTER ONE



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*Concerning the Lord's baptism by John  
in the Jordan. Concerning the calling  
of Peter and Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee.  
Concerning the man possessed of a demon.  
Concerning Peter's mother-in-law.  
Concerning those healed of various diseases.  
Concerning the leper.*

1-3. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My angel before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. The evangelist calls John, who was the last of the prophets, the beginning of the Gospel of the Son of God. For the end of the Old is the beginning of the New Testament. The testimony concerning the Forerunner is taken from two prophets: "Behold, I send My angel before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee" is from Malachi.<sup>1</sup> "The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." is from Isaiah.<sup>2</sup> Here God the Father is speaking to God the Son, calling the Forerunner an "angel" [*angelos*] because of John's angelic and all but immaterial way of life, and also because he comes to announce [*angellein*] and to proclaim the coming of the Christ. John prepared the way of the Lord by preparing the souls of the Jews to accept Christ. He did this by baptizing, that is, immersing them in water. "Before Thy face" means "Thy messenger" will be close to Thee", showing the kinship of the Forerunner to Christ, just as those who go directly before a king in a procession are of the king's own household. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness" refers, perhaps, not only to the Jordan desert but also to the desolate synagogue of the Jews. "The way" is the New Testament; the "paths" are the Old Testament which was well trodden. The Jews needed to be prepared for the way, that is, for the New Testament, and they also

<sup>1</sup> Mat. 3:1

<sup>2</sup> Is. 40:3

<sup>3</sup> The Greek word *angelos* means both "messenger" and "angel".

needed to make straight the Old Testament paths which they had once followed but from which they had turned and become wayward.

**4-5. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins; and there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized by him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.** The baptism of John did not bestow the forgiveness of sins but instead only led mankind to repentance. Why then does Mark say here "unto" the remission of sins? We answer that John preached the baptism of repentance. Where did this preaching lead? Unto the remission of sins, that is, to the baptism of Christ, which bestows the remission of sins.<sup>4</sup> Likewise it might be said that a soldier arrives before the king to summon people to prepare the king's meal, assuring them that it will be for their own good to do so. But that does not mean that the soldier himself will be the benefactor of those who prepare the king's meal. Rather, that the soldier has only commanded the preparation of the meal, and it will be the king who will reward those who have prepared the meal and received him. In like manner, the Forerunner proclaimed the baptism of repentance so that those who repent and receive Christ would have the forgiveness of sins.

**6. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and a leather belt about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey.** We have spoken of these things in the *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*,<sup>5</sup> and we will now speak only of what we did not mention there. John's clothing was a symbol of mourning, for the prophet is showing that he who repents must mourn for his sins. The hair-shirt indicates mourning; the belt of dead animal flesh signifies the deadness of the fleshly Jews.<sup>6</sup> The Lord Himself says that John's clothing

<sup>4</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "For before the Saviour, nowhere does it appear that remission of sins was given, but Christ was the first Who bestowed this gift through Himself and through His own baptism. Therefore it is clear that the baptism of John was a preparation for the remission of sins."

<sup>5</sup> *The Explanation by Bl. Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, Missouri, 1992, p.33.

<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, Bl. Theophylact calls "fleshly" those Jews who understand the Mosaic law in a literal and superficial manner. See *The Explanation of St. Matthew*, ibid., p.125.

indicates mourning, when He says, "We have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented,"<sup>7</sup> where "mourning" refers to the Forerunner's way of life. For He says, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and you say, he hath a demon." The food that John ate certainly showed his self-control, but it may also be seen as a symbol of the spiritual fare of the people at that time. For they did not eat any of the birds of the heavens, which they were allowed to eat, nor did they apprehend the lofty, but instead fed on that which seemed to leap heavenward, but which always fell back to earth again. Such is the nature of the locust, which leaps upwards as if to the heights only to fall back down again. And John's fare of wild honey may also show that the people were eating honey produced by bees, that is, by the prophets, but the honey was not being cultivated and domesticated, meaning, that the words of the prophets were not being well understood, and searched, and comprehended. For the Hebrews had the Scriptures which were sweet as honey,<sup>8</sup> but they were neither tending nor searching them.

**7-8. And preached, saying, There cometh One mightier than I after me, the thong of Whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you in water, but He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit.** John is saying, "I, the least of His servants, am not worthy to unloose the tied thong of His sandal." It may also be understood as follows. All those who came and were baptized by John, by their repentance were loosed from the bond of their sins when they later believed in Christ. Of all these John loosed the thongs and the bonds of their sins. But he was not able to loose the thong of Jesus, because he found no thong, that is, no sin in Him.

**9-11. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.** Jesus does not come to baptism to be forgiven of sins, for

<sup>7</sup> Mt. 11:17

<sup>8</sup> "How sweet to my palate are Thy sayings, more sweet than honey to my mouth." Ps. 118:103.

He committed no sin. Nor does He come to receive a share of the Holy Spirit. For if the baptism of John does not take away sin, as I have already said, how could it bestow the Spirit? But neither does Jesus come to John to be baptized in order to repent; for He was greater by far than the Baptist. Why then does He come? For no other reason than for John to reveal Him to the people. Since a large crowd had gathered, Jesus chooses to come so that all might witness Who He is. At the same time, He comes to be baptized in order to fulfill all righteousness, that is, all the commandments of the law. Since it was considered a commandment to obey a prophet as one sent by God, Jesus fulfilled the commandment by heeding this prophet who was calling all to baptism. The Spirit did not come down because Christ was in need of the Spirit. How could that be, when the Spirit and He are one in essence? Rather the Spirit came down so that you, O reader, might learn that when you are baptized the Holy Spirit comes upon you as well. The descent of the Spirit also accomplished another purpose: when the Father had spoken from above, "This is My Son," the Spirit descended upon Jesus, showing that those words were spoken concerning Christ. Thus the people who heard the voice would not think that it referred to John. The heavens were opened that we might learn that when we are baptized, the heavens are also opened for us.<sup>9</sup>

### 12-13. And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.

<sup>9</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: The Holy Spirit is likened to a dove on account of the tender love which He has for us: when God has been rejected by men, He nonetheless again draws near to men with no less tenderness than before, out of His own goodness. Likewise the dove does not leave off its usual habits, even when men abuse it by snatching away its young. Or, the Holy Spirit is likened to a dove to show that the God of the Old Testament and of the New Testament is one and the same, and to recall to mind the flood in the time of Noah. Then a dove announced the deliverance from the flood by carrying in its beak a twig of olive. And here again the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove to declare the deliverance from sins. Or, the Holy Spirit is likened to a dove on account of the guilelessness and meekness of the dove, and its utmost cleanliness; for it will not stay where there is any stench. The evangelist says "the Spirit", but this is not one of the ministering spirits, but He Who is one in essence with God. Through the witness of the Father and the descent of the Dove, the three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity are revealed. For the Father bore witness from above that while he who baptized was holy, He Who was baptized was God, lest anyone imagine that John was greater than Christ because he baptized Him. For the Jews held John in high regard, but did not consider Jesus so highly. So then, the One Who bore witness was the Father, the One of Whom testimony was given was the Son; and the Holy Spirit showed to Whom the testimony was given. "In Whom I am well pleased" means "in Whom I take My rest" and "He is pleasing to Me."

And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him. The Lord went up onto the mountain to be tempted, teaching us not to become despondent if we are assailed by temptations after our baptism. In fact, He did not go up, but was led up by the Holy Spirit to show that likewise we should not rush into temptations, but should patiently endure them when they come at us. Jesus ascends the mountain so that the devil might be emboldened by the desolation of the place to approach Him. For it is his custom to set upon us when he sees that we are alone. The place was so inaccessible that it was full of wild beasts.<sup>10</sup> The angels ministered unto Him after He had vanquished the tempter; these things are treated at greater length in *The Explanation of St. Matthew*.<sup>11</sup>

14-15. Now after John was handed over, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the Gospel. When He heard that John had been put into prison, Jesus departed into Galilee, to show that we too should not run to meet temptations but should flee them. But when we fall into temptations, we should endure them. It may appear that the Lord is preaching the same things as John, "Repent" and "The kingdom of God is at hand." But it is not so. For John said, "Repent," meaning "Turn away from sins." But Christ says, "Repent," meaning "flee from the letter of the law." This is why He also added the words, "Believe in the Gospel, the Good Tidings."<sup>12</sup> For he who is about to believe through the Gospel, has in fact finished the law. The Lord says that the very time of the law has been fulfilled. Up until now, He says, the law governed, but from now on there is the kingdom and rule of God, that is, a life governed by the Gospel, and such a life is rightly compared to the kingdom of heaven. For when you see one living a life governed by the Gospel, and fasting as if he were

<sup>10</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "Christ was with the wild beasts so that you might learn that he who guards the high station of his soul is fearsome to the wild beasts. For man, before he disobeyed, had been commanded to rule over all things."

<sup>11</sup> op. cil., p.40.

<sup>12</sup> The English word "Gospel" is a contraction of two Old English words, "good" and "spell", together meaning, "Good Tidings", as do also the two Greek words *eu* and *angelion* which form the word *evangelion*.

fleshless, would you not say that this one is already in the kingdom of heaven where there is neither food nor drink, even though heaven appears to be a long way off?

**16-20.** Now as He walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him. And when He had gone a little farther thence, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him. Peter and Andrew were disciples of John the Forerunner; but when they saw John bear witness to Jesus, they went to Jesus. Then when John was put into prison, they became sorrowful and went back again to their own trade. Therefore Christ called them a second time and this second calling is the one here described.<sup>13</sup> See how they supported themselves by honest toil, not by dishonesty; such were they who were worthy to become Christ's first disciples. They immediately put down what was in their hands and followed Him. For one should not procrastinate, but follow at once. After Peter and Andrew, the Lord then draws James and John into His net. Although they too were poor, they nonetheless supported their father in his old age. But they left their father, not because it is good to leave one's father, but because he was about to hinder them from following Christ. If you, O reader, are likewise hindered by your parents, leave them and run towards the good. It appears that Zebedee did not believe; but his wife, the mother of the apostles, believed and followed,<sup>14</sup> perhaps after Zebedee had died. Know this as well, that Christ first calls for action and deeds, and then for vision of the divine. For Peter signifies action because he is the most fervent and leaps out in front of the others. Such is the nature of action. But John signifies vision of the divine, for John is the most filled with theology.

<sup>13</sup> John 1:35-42 describes the first calling.

<sup>14</sup> See Mt. 20:20.

**21-22.** And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. Where were they coming from when they entered into Capernaum? From Nazareth. On the sabbath day the Jews would gather in the synagogue to read the Scriptures, and it was then that Christ also entered the synagogue and taught. For indeed the law commanded rest on the sabbath for this very reason, that men would have time for reading of the Scriptures when they gathered together. The Lord would rebuke when He taught, and not flatter as did the Pharisees. For He exhorted them to do good, and warned them of the punishment awaiting the disobedient.

**23-28.** And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new teaching is this? For with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. The evil spirits are called unclean because they wickedly take pleasure in every kind of shameful deed. Moreover, the demon considers his departure from the man to be his own destruction; for the demons are without pity and believe that they suffer ill if they are not permitted to do evil to men. Also, because they love the flesh and are accustomed to feeding upon carnal vapors, they are starved when they do not dwell within a body. This is why the Lord says that the demons come out of a man by fasting.<sup>15</sup> The foul demon did not say, "Thou art holy," for there were many prophets who were also holy. Instead he said, "The Holy One," with the article; that is, He Who alone and by definition is Holy. But Christ shut his mouth in order to teach us that even if the demons speak

<sup>15</sup> Mk. 9:29

the truth we must curb them.<sup>16</sup> The demon throws the man down and rends him so that those who witnessed this would see from what great evil the man had been delivered, and would believe in Christ because of the miracle.

**29-31.** And forthwith, when He had come out of the synagogue, He entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and straightway they tell Him of her. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. As was the custom on the evening of the sabbath, Jesus went to have supper at the house of His disciples. And she who ought to have served them was sick with a fever, but Jesus healed her and then she served them. This account makes clear that if you, O reader, are suffering from an illness and God heals you, make use of your health to minister to the saints and to serve God. A feverish man is also one who is angry and shakes his fist. But if God the Word should take him by the hand, and if he ceases to shake his fist, then this once angry man attends to the Word. For if the Word takes the angry man by the hand and he arises, then anger waits upon the Word.

**32-34.** And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with demons. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many demons; and suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew Him. The evangelist does not add without cause the words, "when the sun did set." Since the Jews thought that it was not permitted for one to heal on the

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<sup>16</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "The Lord curbed the demon. For Truth had no need of recommendation by the evil spirits, nor to be praised by the testimony of its adversaries. At the same time He hands down to us the salvific teaching that we should never believe the demons, even if they assert that they are speaking the truth. Since the demon spoke in a sober and composed manner, and all those present supposed that the words came from the heart of the man, and not from the demon, the Lord permitted the demon to throw the man down so that it would be clear that the words were demonic, and not spoken by the man. The demon 'came out of him' without harming him. For when the Lord cast him out, the demon did no harm; but the Lord permitted him to throw the man down for the sake of those present, but allowed no harm to be done, so that the power of Him Who commanded might be revealed."

sabbath day, they waited until sunset and then brought the sick to be healed. It says that "He healed many," perhaps meaning, "He healed all," for "all" are "many". Or it could be interpreted that He did not heal all, because there were some who did not believe, and these were not healed on account of their unbelief; but many of those who were brought forward were healed, namely, those who had faith. He did not permit the demons to speak, as I have said, teaching us not to believe them even if they speak the truth. For if they find some persons who completely believe them, there is no limit to what can be done by these accursed demons, who mix falsity with truth. Likewise Paul stopped the spirit of divination from saying, "These men are servants of the most high God."<sup>17</sup> For the saint did not wish to receive commendation or testimony from an unclean mouth.

**35-39.** And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, Jesus went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee. And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out demons. After healing the sick He goes away by Himself, teaching us not to do anything for show. Even if we should do something good, we should strive to hide it. And He prays to teach us that if we do something good, we should ascribe it to God and say to Him, "Every good gift is from above and cometh down from Thee."<sup>18</sup> For indeed He Himself did not need to pray. He does not give Himself over to the multitude that is seeking Him and longing for Him; while acknowledging their desire to see Him, He goes to the others who are also in need of healing and teaching. It did not befit Him to restrict His teaching to one place, but He shed the bright rays of the Word everywhere. See how He intertwines action with teaching. For He was both preaching and casting out demons. So you also, O reader, must teach and then act, lest your words be empty. For if Christ had not shown forth miracles, His words would not have been believed.

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<sup>17</sup> Acts 16:16-19

<sup>18</sup> Jas. 1:17

40-42. And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I am willing; be thou clean. And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. The leper had both faith and understanding, so he did not say, "If Thou ask God," but, "If Thou wilt," believing in Him as God. Christ touches Him to show that there is nothing that is unclean. For the law forbade one to touch a leper, as he was unclean. But the Saviour touches the leper, showing that nothing is unclean by nature and that man ought to be set free from the observances of the law, and that these observances applied only to man and not to God. Remember that Elisha had such reverence for the law that he could not endure to see, let alone touch, Naaman who was a leper asking for healing.<sup>19</sup>

43-45. And He sternly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter. By this as well we are taught not to make a show when we do good to someone. See how the Lord Himself commands the man who had been cleansed not to spread His fame. Yet He knew that the man would not obey, but would tell all. Nevertheless He commands him to say nothing, as I have said, teaching us not to boast. Still one must be grateful and thank one's benefactor, even if the benefactor does not desire it. For though the Lord had forbidden him, the leper told everyone of the good thing that had been done to him. The Lord sends him to the priest. For the law decreed that unless the priest declared the former leper to be clean, he was not permitted to enter the city, but was to be driven away. Jesus also commands him to offer the gift which those who had been cleansed were supposed to offer, so that the gift might be testimony that

Jesus was not opposed to the law. On the contrary, He held it in such high regard that He Himself commanded the very things that were prescribed by the law.

<sup>19</sup> IV Kings (II Kings) 5:12

*Concerning the paralytic.*

*Concerning Jesus eating with the publicans.*

*Concerning the disciples plucking the heads of wheat  
on the sabbath.*

1-5. And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and He preached the word unto them. And they came unto Him, bringing a paralytic who was borne by four. And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the paralytic, Child, thy sins be forgiven thee. What does this mean—"after some days"?<sup>1</sup> It means "when several days had gone by". When Jesus had entered the house, the people heard that He was inside and all came running, hoping that it would be easy to meet Him there. The faith of those men was so great that they even made an opening in the roof through which they lowered the paralytic. Thereupon the Lord healed him, seeing the faith of those who carried him, or of the paralytic himself. For the paralytic would not have agreed to be carried if he himself had not believed that he would be healed. Many times the Lord healed the unbelieving sick on account of the faith of those who brought them. Similarly, He often healed the one brought to Him because of that man's faith, despite the unbelief of those who brought him. First He forgives the sins of the sick man and then He cures the disease, since the most severe illnesses occur for the most part as a result of sins. So it is that the Lord said of the paralytic in John's Gospel that it was as a result of sins that the man had been paralyzed.<sup>2</sup> But the paralytic in John's Gospel is not the same one mentioned here. For the man in John's account had no one to help him, while this man

<sup>1</sup> Bl. Theophylact is here interpreting for his contemporary Greek reader of 1100 A.D. the somewhat difficult New Testament Greek phrase *dī' ēmerōn*.

<sup>2</sup> Jn. 5:5-15

had four. And that man was by the Sheep's Pool; this man was in the house. And this one was in Capernaum, while the other was in Jerusalem, to name but a few differences. But know that the paralytic mentioned by Matthew<sup>3</sup> and the one mentioned here by Mark are one and the same.

6-12. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And Jesus, immediately knowing in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Is it easier to say to the paralytic, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins—He saith to the paralytic—I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. When the Lord said that He could forgive sins, the Pharisees falsely accused the Lord of blasphemy, since God alone can forgive sins. But the Lord gives yet more evidence that He is God, by knowing what was in their hearts. God alone knows what is in the heart of each, for, as the prophet says, "Thou alone knowest the hearts of the sons of men."<sup>4</sup> But although the Lord had revealed their innermost thoughts, the Pharisees remained senseless, not conceding that He Who knew their hearts could heal their sins as well. By healing the body, the Lord makes credible and certain the healing of the soul as well, confirming the invisible by means of the visible, and the more difficult by what was easier, though it did not appear so to the Pharisees. For the Pharisees thought it was more difficult to heal the body, because it was something visible. And they thought that it was easy to say that the soul had been healed because this healing was invisible. Perhaps they were thinking thoughts like these: Look at this deceiver. He declined to heal the body which is visible, and instead claims to heal the soul which is invisible, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Certainly, were He able, He would heal the body rather than

<sup>3</sup> Mt. 9:2-8

<sup>4</sup> II Chron. 6:30; III Kings (I Kings) 8:39.

pretend to do something that cannot be seen. Therefore the Saviour shows them that He is able to do both, saying, "Which is easier? To heal the body or the soul? Certainly it is easier to heal the body, but you think just the opposite. So I will heal the body, which in fact is easy, although it seems difficult to you. By so doing I will confirm the healing of the soul as well, which is difficult although it seems easy because it is invisible and cannot be verified." Then He says to the paralytic; "Arise, and take up thy bed," to confirm even more that the miracle was not a phantasy, and also to show that He had not only healed him but had filled him with strength. For the Lord does the same with our spiritual sicknesses. He not only delivers us from our sins, but also fills us with strength to do His commandments. Therefore I too who am a paralytic can be healed. For Christ at this very moment is in Capernaum, which, interpreted, is the house of comfort and consolation, which is the Church. For the house of the Comforter is the Church. I too am a paralytic, for the powers of my soul are inert and will not move to do good. But if I am carried by the four evangelists and brought to the Lord, then I will hear Him call me, "Child," (for by doing His commandments I become a son of God) and my sins will be forgiven me. But how can I be brought to Jesus? If they make an opening in the roof. And what is the roof? It is my mind, which over-arches all that is within me. And it is a roof made of many earthen and clay tiles, signifying earthly affairs. But if all these things are pulled away, and the strength of the mind within us is opened up and freed of the weight of earthly things, then I will be lowered, that is, I will be humbled. For I ought not to rise up in pride because my mind has been freed of its earthly covering; but, instead, after I have been unburdened of earthly things, I ought to be lowered, that is, humbled. Then I will be healed and I will take up my bed, which is my body, and employ it to do the commandments. For I should not only be raised up from sin and understand that I sin, but I should also take up my bed, that is, get my body up and set it to do good. Then we shall also be able to see with spiritual eyes, so that all our thoughts within us can say, "We never saw it on this fashion," which means, "We never understood until now that we were paralytics and have since been healed." For only he who has been cleansed of sins sees things as they truly are.

13-17. And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by,

Jesus saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting collecting tax, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at table in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole hath no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. When He had worked the miracle of healing the paralytic, the Lord went away along the sea as if desiring to be alone, but the multitude again ran after Him. Learn from this, O reader, that so much as you flee from praise and glory, just so much will praise and glory pursue you. But if you pursue them, they will flee from you. Thus, when the Lord Himself fled along the sea, the multitude again pursued Him. And yet again He fled from there as well. And as He passed by, He took Matthew. He whom Mark here calls "Levi" is Matthew, for Matthew had two names. Luke and Mark call him "Levi" in order to hide his real name. But he himself is not ashamed and in his own Gospel names himself Matthew. For he says, "Jesus saw Matthew the publican."<sup>5</sup> Therefore neither should we be ashamed to confess our own sins. Levi was sitting at the tax booth, so it would seem, either demanding payment from some or figuring accounts, or doing something else that tax collectors do at their place of work. He was so excited that he left everything and followed the Lord, and he was so joyful that he invited many to eat with them. But the Pharisees, who considered themselves to be pure, found fault with this. But the Lord said, "I came not to call the righteous, that is you who consider yourselves righteous" (and here He spoke ironically for they were in fact sinners), "but to call sinners, not so that they would remain sinners, but to call them to repentance, that they might turn from their sin." Lest you think that He calls sinners, but does nothing to better them, He adds the words "to repentance".

18-20. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast:

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<sup>5</sup> See Mt. 9:9.

and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridal chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. Even the disciples of John were imperfect in their understanding of Christ and they continued to keep the Judaic customs. Therefore certain individuals approached Christ and held up John's disciples as an example, accusing Christ's disciples of not fasting as did John's. He answered by saying, "Now I am the Bridegroom, and My disciples ought to be cheerful and ought not to fast. But when I am taken from this life, then temptations will beset them and they will fast and struggle." He calls Himself the Bridegroom not only because He weds virgin souls, but also because the time of His first coming is not a time of grief or gloom for those who believe in Him, nor is it a time of much toil. For without any labors on our part to fulfill the law, He gives us rest in baptism. What toil is it to be baptized? None at all, yet it is through this easily accomplished act that we find salvation. "The sons of the bridal chamber" are the apostles, for they also have been deemed worthy to share the Bridegroom's joy. They share with Him every heavenly good thing and every spiritual pleasure. But also understand it in this manner: every man, when he labors unto virtue, is a son of the bridal chamber. While he has Christ the Bridegroom with him, he does not fast, that is, he does not do the works of repentance. For how could one who is not sinning do so? But when Christ the Bridegroom has been taken from him, that is, when he has fallen into sin, then he fasts and repents so that he might be healed of his sin.

21-22. No man seweth a piece of unshrunken cloth on an old garment: else the new piecee that filled it up pulleth away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old wineskins: else the new wine doth burst the wineskins, and the wine is spilled, and the wineskins will be destroyed: but new wine must be put into new wineskins. He says that a piece of new cloth, when patched on to an old garment, will tear it because it has not shrunk and it is too stiff, and that new wine will burst old wineskins as it warms. Likewise burdening My disciples with more than their strength allows would harm them. They are like the old garments because of the weak-

ness of their understanding. It is not necessary to lay on them the strong commandment of fasting. You may also understand it thus: as the disciples of Christ belong to the New, they are not able to observe the practices and laws of the Old.

23-28. And it came to pass, that He went through the wheat fields on the sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they made their way, to pluck the heads of wheat. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the loaves of oblation, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath. The disciples of the Lord were plucking the heads of wheat as if they were no longer accustomed to living according to the law. The Pharisees became indignant, and then were refuted by Christ Who brought up the example of David who, by necessity, set aside the law in the days of Abiathar the high priest. For as the prophet David was fleeing from Saul, he came to this high priest and tricked him into thinking that he had been sent by the king on some urgent military mission. Whereupon David not only ate the loaves of oblation, but also took the sword of Goliath which had been dedicated to the Lord. There were twelve loaves set out each day on the table in the sanctuary, six on the right side and six on the left. Some have asked how it is that the evangelist here calls the high priest Abiathar, while in the book of Kings he is called Ahimelech.<sup>6</sup> It can be said that perhaps Abiathar had two names and that he was also called Ahimelech. Also it can be said that the book of Kings says that the priest at that time was Ahimelech, while the evangelist says that the high priest was Abiathar. So this is not contradictory, for the priest was Ahimelech, while the high priest was Abiathar. Understand this also in a spiritual sense: when the disciples of Christ, "on the sabbath," that is, when their souls were at rest from the passions (for 'sabbath' means 'rest'), and the demons did

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 21:1-9

not war against them, then they "made their way", that is, they became guides and led the way for others along the path of virtue.<sup>7</sup> As they went, they plucked out all that was rooted in the earth and in earthly imagination. For if one does not first rest from the passions, and establish himself in quietness, he cannot lead others along the way and become a guide towards the good.

## CHAPTER THREE

*Concerning the man with the withered hand.*

*On the choosing of the apostles.*

*Concerning His mother and brothers.*

1-5. And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had a withered hand. And they were watching Him, whether He would heal him on the sabbath day, that they might accuse Him. And He saith unto the man who had the withered hand, Arise and stand into the middle. And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill? But they were silent. And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. When the disciples were accused by the Jews of plucking the heads of wheat on the sabbath, the Lord refuted the accusers first by means of the example of David. But now He puts them to shame even more by working this miracle, pointing out, "Not only did My disciples not sin by plucking the heads of wheat, but even I Myself labor on the sabbath day by working a miracle. If it is bad to work a miracle on the sabbath, it is also bad simply to work for the necessities on the sabbath. But truly, to work a miracle to heal a man is of God, and surely he who does something good on the sabbath does not transgress the law." This is why the Lord asks them if it is lawful to do good, to shame them for hindering Him from doing good. The right hand is withered of anyone who does not do those deeds that belong to the portion on the right. And Christ says to the man with the withered hand, "Arise." Arise, that is, from sin and stand in the middle, which means, in the middle place of the virtues, the golden mean. For each virtue lies in the middle, inclining neither to omission nor to excess. Therefore when he stands at this golden mean, his hand will be restored whole and sound. Note the word "restored". For there was a time when our hands, that is, our strength to act, were sound, when there was not yet any transgression. But when the hand of man was stretched out to take the forbidden fruit, from that time on it withered and could not do good. But it will again be restored to its former health when we stand in the middle of the virtues.

<sup>7</sup> Here Bl. Theophylact draws upon the double meaning of the verb *odopoein*, to make one's way, and to lead the way.

6-12. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him. And He told His disciples, that a small boat should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him. For He had healed many; so much so that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had scourgings. And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And He sternly charged them that they should not make Him known. Who were the Herodians? They were either soldiers of Herod, or adherents to a newly appeared heresy which taught that Herod himself was the messiah, because with him the succession of Judaic kings had come to an end. For the prophecy of Jacob clearly stated that when the line of princes from Judah would fail, then the Christ would come.<sup>1</sup> Therefore since there was no Judaic prince during Herod's years, and Herod, a native of Idumea, ruled as a foreigner, there were those who thought that he was the messiah. They formed a heretical faction, and it was they who were attempting to kill the Lord. But the Lord withdrew, for it was not yet time for the Passion. But He also withdrew from those ungrateful ones so that He might do good to others as well. For many followed Him and He healed them, and even those of Tyre and Sidon, who were foreigners, received His help. But those of His own kin drove Him away, showing that kinship of blood is of no benefit without kinship of heart. So the foreigners came to Jesus from afar, but the Jews, to whom Jesus came, drove Him away. Observe as well the absence of vainglory in Him: so that the multitude would not throng around Him, He asked for a small boat in which He could enter and be seen without the people crowding around Him. "Scourges" mean illnesses. For indeed illnesses are often laid upon us for chastisement, God disciplining us as a father does his children. Understand this as well, that the Herodians, who are fleshly and carnal, desire to kill Jesus, for "Herod" means "fleshly". But those who follow Him are those who

depart from their own homes and cities, that is, who leave behind all relations according to the flesh. Whereupon their scourges are healed, I mean, their sins which scourge the conscience, and the unclean spirits are driven out. Take heed how Jesus gives orders to His disciples that a boat should be made ready for Him so that the multitude would not throng Him. For Jesus is the Word within you, Which commands that your boat, signifying your body, should wait on Him and not set forth into the tempest of life's affairs, lest the crowds, signifying the turmoil of life's affairs, throng Christ within you.

13-19. And He goeth up onto a mountain, and calleth unto Him those whom He wanted: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to heal sicknesses, and to cast out demons: and Simon He surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, the sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. He goes up onto the mountain to pray. Since He has worked miracles, He prays after the demonstration of miracles, teaching all of us that we should give thanks to God whenever we have labored and achieved some good, and that we should attribute that good to God's power. Or, by another interpretation, He ascends the mountain to pray because He was about to ordain the apostles, so that we might learn that when we intend to ordain someone, we too should first pray that the worthy candidate might be revealed to us lest we share in the transgressions of another. The Lord makes even Judas an apostle, teaching us that God does not reject a man now because of the evil that he will do in the future; but rather He deems him worthy of honor now for the sake of the virtue which he now possesses, even though later he will turn out to be evil. The evangelist lists the names of the apostles because of false apostles, so that it would be known which were the true apostles. The Lord names Zebedee's sons "the sons of thunder", because they were great preachers, filled with theology.

19-22. And they went into an house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 49:10

when those with Him heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons casteth He out demons. "When those with Him heard," meaning His own family, or perhaps those of His own city, or even His own brothers, "they went to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself," that is, He has a demon. For when they heard that He was casting out demons and healing the sick, out of envy they thought that He had a demon and so was beside Himself. So they wanted to "lay hold on Him" in order to tie Him up, as was done to those who were demon-possessed. "Those with Him," meaning, His own family, acted in this manner; but the scribes from Jerusalem thought the same as well, and said that He had a demon. Since they had nothing to say against the things that He did, they found another way to slander the miracles, saying that He did these things with the help of demons.

**23-27.** And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a household be divided against itself, that household cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will plunder his house. By means of irrefutable examples, He stops the mouths of those malevolent Jews. How is it possible, He asks, for a demon to cast out demons? As we can see in the case of a household, if those within the house are at peace with each other, that household is united and strong. But if they are divided against each other, the household falls apart. Or how is it possible, He asks, to steal a strong man's goods, unless they first tie him up? What He means is this: "the strong man" is the demon, and his goods are those persons in whom he dwells. Therefore, unless one first binds the demon and destroys him, how could one steal his goods, that is, those who are demon-possessed? Since I am stealing his goods, that is, I am freeing men from demonic possession, it follows that first I have bound and destroyed the demons, and that I am their enemy. How can you say, therefore, that I "have Beelzebub," that is, that I am a friend of demons and a magician? For I cast out demons.

**28-30.** Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is liable to eternal damnation. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit. What He is saying here is this: whatever other sin a man may commit, he will perhaps have some excuse and obtain forgiveness, since God is forbearing with human weakness. For example, when they said that the Lord was a glutton and drunkard and a friend of publicans and sinners, they will be forgiven for this. But when they see Him working extraordinary miracles and then blaspheme the Holy Spirit, that is, blaspheme the miracles that took place through the Holy Spirit, how will they then obtain forgiveness, unless they repent? For when they took offence at what Christ did in the flesh, they were forgiven this even without repenting, for what they saw scandalized them as men. But when they saw Him doing the works of God and still blasphemed, how will they be forgiven while remaining unrepentant?

**31-35.** There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee. And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren? And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother. The brothers of the Lord out of envy approached to lay hold of Him as one who was "beside himself" and demon-possessed. Vainglory perhaps had taken hold of His mother, and she came to draw Him away from His teaching, thus showing the multitude that she could lead around the One at Whom they marvelled, and even make Him leave His teaching. The Lord therefore replies, "My mother will derive no benefit from being My mother unless she has the other virtues as well; likewise, neither will kinship of the flesh benefit My brothers." For Christ's true kin are they who do the will of God. By saying these things, the Lord is not thereby denying His mother, but He is showing that she will not be worthy of honor only because she gave Him birth, but because she also possesses every other virtue. And if she does not have these virtues, others will be shown greater honor for their true kinship to Him.

*Concerning the parable of the sower.  
Concerning the rebuking of the waters.*

1-2. And He began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a boat, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And He taught them many things by parables. Although He seemed to have dismissed His mother, He is again obedient to her. For it is for her sake that He left the house and went out along the sea. He sat in the boat so that, facing everyone, He could speak and all could hear, and no one would be behind His back.<sup>1</sup>

2-12. And said unto them in His teaching, Hearken: Behold, there went forth a sower to sow. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell along the way, and the winged creatures of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth, but when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, one thirty, another sixty, and another an hundred. And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are outside, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.<sup>2</sup> He first tells this parable of the sower, to

make His listeners more attentive. Since He is about to say that the seed is the word, which is destroyed when it falls among those who are inattentive, He begins by speaking of these things, so that His listeners might make every effort not to be like that earth which destroyed the seed. Who, then, is the sower? It is Christ Himself, Who in His compassion and condescension towards man "went forth" from the bosom of the Father, without thereby leaving it. He went forth, not to burn up the accursed earth and evil hearts, nor to cut off the thorns, but to sow the seed. What seed? Surely not that of Moses or of the prophets? No, but Christ's own; that is, He went forth to preach His Gospel. Thus, Christ sowed the seed; but some seed fell on a soul which had been trodden on by many. And the winged creatures of the air, that is, the demons who live in the air, ate up the seed. For the path, trodden by many, signifies those who strive to please others. For when a person does everything with the objective of pleasing first this one and then that one, then he is trodden upon by many. Mark this: He did not say, "The sower threw the seed along the way," but that the seed "fell". For when the sower casts the seed, he does so as onto good ground; but when the ground proves to be evil, it destroys the seed, that is, the word. Others say that "fell along the way" means that the seed fell onto an unbelieving heart. For the way is Christ, while the unbelievers are along the wayside, outside of the way which is Christ.<sup>3</sup> Other seed falls upon stony souls, meaning, those who easily accept the seed, and then reject it. Those who are stony resemble, to a small degree, the rock which is Christ, inasmuch as they accepted the Word. But inasmuch as they accept it only for a time and then reject it, they are dissimilar. Other seed falls upon a soul surrounded by many cares, for cares are thorns. But the fourth part of the seed falls upon good ground. See how rare is good ground, and how few are saved, for only a fourth part of the seed was preserved. To the disciples who asked Him when they were alone, the Lord said, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries." But surely it is not by fate or by chance that it is given to some by their nature to know, and not to others? Far from it!

<sup>1</sup> A Greek scholion adds: "And from the sea He fishes for those on land."

<sup>2</sup> See Isaiah 6:9-10. "And He said, Go, and say to this people, Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has grown fat, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I

should heal them."

<sup>3</sup> *para tēn odon* is translated in the KJV as "by the way side", and here, as "along the way". The preposition *para* in this context can mean either 'on the road' or 'beside the road'. A similar ambiguity is also present in the English preposition 'along': 'They travelled along the river' could refer either to a trip by boat on the water or a hike by foot beside the river.

But it is given to those who ask. For the Lord says, "Ask, and it shall be given you."<sup>4</sup> But the others, the Lord has blinded lest it be to their greater condemnation that they should understand what they ought to do, and yet not do it. There is another interpretation. Do you wish to understand that God has made all to see what it is they ought to do? Listen: that they see, comes from God; but that they see without perceiving, comes from their own wickedness. For God created them able to see, that is, to understand the good, but they do not see, intentionally shutting their eyes so that they will not turn back and be corrected. It is as if they despised their own salvation and betterment. So, then, it can be understood as follows: "To the others I speak in parables, so that seeing they may choose not to see, and hearing they may choose not to understand, for fear that by doing so, they would turn back and be corrected."

**13-20.** And He said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word. And these are they along the way, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they fall away. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred. Here are three types of those who destroy the word: the inattentive, who are on the trodden path, preoccupied with pleasing all and sundry; those of little faith, who are among the stones; and the pleasure-seekers, who are among the thorns. There are also three types of those who accepted and preserved the seed: those who bear fruit a hundredfold, who lead a life at the pinnacle of

<sup>4</sup> Mt. 7:7 and Lk. 11:9.

perfection; those who bear fruit sixtyfold, who live a life of moderate achievement; and those who bear thirtyfold, who achieve small things, yet they, too, contribute according to their strength. For example, some are virgins and desert dwellers, others are monastics who live together in communities, while others are laity who are married. But the Lord accepts them all as good ground which bears fruit. Thanks be to His love for man!

**21-23.** And He said unto them, Is a lamp brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? And not to be set on a lamp stand? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come into the open. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. Here He exhorts the apostles to be shining examples in life and in conduct. For just as a lamp is set out where its brightness may be seen, so will your life be conspicuous to all, and all will look upon it. So you must strive to lead a good life; for you will not sit in a corner, but you will be a lamp. The lamp is not hidden under a bed, but it is placed on a lamp stand and sheds light on all. Each one of you is a lamp which ought to be placed upon a lamp stand, which is the high place belonging to a God-pleasing life, so that you might shine on others as well. Your lamp should not be placed under a bushel, which signifies gluttony and making much ado about food; nor should it be placed under a bed, which signifies ease and relaxation. For no one who makes much ado about food and desires to take his ease can, by his own life, be a lamp that shines upon all. "For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested." Whatever one does in secret, whether good or evil, will be revealed, both now, and how much more so in the age to come. Is there anything more hidden than God? Yet God Himself was revealed in the flesh.

**24-25.** And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. He exhorts His disciples to spiritual sobriety. "Take heed," He says, "what you hear," let nothing of what I have said slip away from you. For "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you;" that is, whatever degree of attention you give Me, by that same degree will you receive

benefit. For if a listener pays the utmost attention, God will give to him in return great benefit. But if he is lax, the degree of benefit will likewise be less. He who has eagerness and zeal will receive benefit. But from him who does not have eagerness and zeal, even what he thinks he has will be taken away. Even the small spark of zeal which he used to have is extinguished by laziness, just as it is kindled by attention.

**26-29.** And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed onto the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full grain in the ear. But when the crop is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. The kingdom of God means God's economy for us [that is, His ordering of His creation towards our salvation]. The "man" is God Himself, Who became man for our sake. The seed which He cast onto the earth is the preaching of the Gospel. After He had cast it, He slept, meaning, He ascended into heaven. Yet He rises night and day, for though God appears to sleep, He rises: at night, when He raises us up by means of temptations to a knowledge of Himself; and by day, when He orders our life with sweetness and joy. The seed grows, "He knoweth not how." For we have free will, and whether the seed increases or not depends on our own inclination. For we do not bear fruit by necessity, but by our own will, first producing the leaf and showing forth the beginnings of good when we are infants and have not yet reached the measure of maturity in Christ. Then we produce the ear, when we are able to withstand the storms of temptations. For then the stalk has grown joint upon joint, and stands upright, and is more mature. Then comes the full grain in the ear when one bears the good fruit. "When the crop is brought forth," then the sickle gathers the fruit. The sickle means the Word of God, and the harvest signifies the end of the world.

**30-34.** And He said, Wherunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is smaller than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all the plants, and shooteth out great branches; so that the winged creatures of the air lodge in its shade.

And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples. The word of faith is very small: "believe in Christ and you will be saved." You see, it is as small as the grain of mustard seed. But once the preaching of the Gospel had been sown on the earth, it grew and became more spacious, until the winged creatures of the air, meaning those who are lofty and exalted in mind and knowledge, could lodge in it. For how many of the wise have abandoned the Greek wisdom and found rest in the preaching? Thus the preaching became greater than all else, and put forth great branches. For the apostles parted, like branches, one going to Rome, another to India, another to Greece, and others to other parts of the earth. He spoke to the multitudes in many parables, offering parables according to the frame of mind of His listeners. For the multitude were ordinary, unlearned folk, and for this reason He mentions the grain of mustard, the blade, and the seed, so that with common everyday words He could teach them something beneficial; or, so that He could induce them to approach Him and ask, and by asking, to learn what they did not know. For He explained everything to His disciples when they were alone, as they had approached Him and asked. "He explained all things" means that He explained everything which they did not understand and about which they had asked. For He did not explain literally "all things", including what was already clear. Rather, they learned those things about which they had asked; the rest was clear to them. In this way, then, He "expounded all things" to them.

**35-41.** And the same day, when the evening was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the boat. And there were also with Him other little boats. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was now full. And He was in the stern of the boat, asleep on a headrest: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea

obey Him? Matthew relates these events somewhat differently than does Mark.<sup>5</sup> For those things which Matthew speaks of at length, Mark has shortened; and, by the same token, those things which Matthew has shortened, Mark has expanded upon.<sup>6</sup> The Lord takes only the disciples with Him, so that they would see the miracle about to take place. But lest they become puffed up that He took them while sending the others away, He allows them to be tossed by the storm; at the same time, He teaches them to endure temptations. He sleeps, so that when the disciples had first been shaken with fear, the miracle might appear all the greater to them. For if Christ had been awake when the storm arose, either they would not have become afraid, or they would not have called upon Him. He permits them to fall to a great fear of the danger, so that they might come to a realization of His power. For they had seen the good things done to the multitude, but they themselves had not experienced any such good things, and there was the danger that they would become lazy and careless. So He permits the storm to occur, but He sleeps against a headrest of the boat, this headrest undoubtedly made of wood. When He awoke He rebuked first the wind (for it is the wind which causes the sea to become rough) and then the sea. He also rebukes the disciples for not having faith. For if they had faith, they would have believed that even while He was asleep He could keep them unharmed. "They said to one another, What manner of man is this?" They still had doubts concerning Him. For when He calmed the sea by His command alone, and not with a rod, as did Moses,<sup>7</sup> and not by an invocation of God, as did Elisha at the Jordan,<sup>8</sup> and not with the ark, as did Joshua, the son of Nun,<sup>9</sup> then they thought that He was more than a man; but when He slept, He appeared to them only as a man.

<sup>5</sup> Mt. 8:23-27

<sup>6</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "For example, Mark says that with the boat in which Christ was, there were other small boats. He adds this detail, not without reason, but because he wished to show that, by divine ordering of events [lit. by economy], only the one boat was in danger of sinking."

<sup>7</sup> Ex. 14:21-28

<sup>8</sup> IV Kings (II Kings) 2:13-14

<sup>9</sup> Joshua 3:12-24

## CHAPTER FIVE

*Concerning the legion of demons.*

*Concerning the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue.*

*Concerning the woman with the issue of blood.*

**1-5.** And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. The more precise of the manuscripts read: "into the country of the Gergesenes." Matthew says that there were two men possessed by demons;<sup>1</sup> while Mark and Luke speak only of one,<sup>2</sup> since they chose to tell only of the fiercer of the two. This man possessed by a demon approaches the Lord and declares that Jesus is the Son of God. For those in the boat were unsure what manner of man Jesus was. But the testimonial witness of enemies, such as the demons here, is the most trustworthy evidence of all. The possessed man lived among the tombs, as he wanted to inspire in men the false belief that the souls of those who have died become demons. But far be it from any one to believe such a thing.

**6-10.** But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and fell prostrate before Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not. For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. The demons consider it a torment to come out of a man, and

<sup>1</sup> Mt. 8:28

<sup>2</sup> Lk. 8:27

this is why they say, "that Thou torment not;" meaning, do not lead us out of our dwelling place, which is this man. Furthermore, they thought that the Lord would not tolerate the excess of evil they had dared to commit, and here and now would hand them over to their final punishment. This is also why they pleaded with Him not to torment them. The Lord asked the man his name, not because He needed to find out what it was, but so that the others would learn of the multitude of demons dwelling within him. Since there appeared to be only one demon, the Lord showed how many enemies there were with which that pitiable man had to struggle.

**11-14.** Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the demons besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. The demons ask the Lord not to send them out of that region, but to let them depart into the herd of swine. And He allows this. For our life is like a school of wrestling, and so the Lord was not willing to let the demons depart from this life, but wanted them to remain to wrestle with us and make us more experienced in the struggle. He permitted them to enter into the swine so that we would learn that just as the demons did not spare the swine, likewise they would not have spared that man if divine power had not preserved him. For the demons are our enemies and would destroy us in an instant if God did not preserve us. Learn that neither do the demons have authority over swine, much less over men, if God did not permit it. Understand that the demons also enter into men who live like swine, rolling in the mire of pleasures, and the demons hurl them over the precipice of destruction and into the sea of this life, where they drown.

**14-20.** And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the demon, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the demon, and also concerning the swine.

And they began to beseech Him to depart out of their coasts. And when He was come into the boat, he that had been possessed with the demon besought Him that he might be with Him. Yet Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel. The inhabitants of that city, astonished at the miracle, went out to see Jesus. When they heard what had happened, they were greatly afraid. This is why they pleaded with Jesus "to depart out of their coasts." They were afraid that they might suffer even greater damage than this. For they had suffered the loss of the swine, and were grieved at that loss, and thus wanted the Lord to leave. But "he that had been possessed with the demon besought Him that he might be with Him." For he was afraid that the demons would find him alone and would again set upon him. But the Lord sends him away to his own house, first of all, to show the man that even though He Himself is not present, His power and protecting care will keep him safe; and secondly, so that the man would bring benefit to those who would see him. And behold, the man began to "proclaim... and all men did marvel." See also the absence of boasting on the Saviour's part. He did not say, "Tell what great things I have done for thee," but, "Tell what great things the Lord hath done for thee." So too must you, O reader, attribute to God, and not to yourself, whatever good thing you may have done.

**21-29.** And when Jesus was passed over again by boat unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with Him; and much people followed Him, and thronged Him. And a certain woman, who had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain

of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that scourge. After the miracle done to the man possessed of a demon, the Lord works another miracle, raising up the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. The evangelist mentions the name of the ruler of the synagogue for the sake of the Jews who knew of this event. Now this man had faith in half measure only. By falling at the Lord's feet, he had faith; by beseeching Him to come in person, he did not show as much faith as he ought. For he ought to have said, "Only say the word." As the Lord went with him, as if just in passing He also healed the woman with an issue of blood.<sup>3</sup> This woman had great faith, for she thought she could receive benefit even from His garment. And so indeed she received healing. You should also understand these things as pertaining to human nature, which also had an issue of blood. For human nature had been gushing forth sin which was killing the soul as it drained out the life-blood of the soul. It could not be healed by the many physicians, that is, the wise of this world, and indeed the law and the prophets. But as soon as our human nature touched Christ's clothes, that is, His flesh, it was healed. For he who touches Christ's clothes is he who believes that Christ took flesh.

30-34. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes? And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me? And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy scourge. Power goes out from Christ, not travelling from one location to another, but rather imparted to others while remaining in Christ undiminished. It is the same with teachings, which remain with those who teach, and yet are imparted to those who learn. See how none of the multitude who were thronging about Him touched Him, but rather she who was not thronging about Him. We learn from

<sup>3</sup> Holy Tradition gives the name of this woman who suffered from an issue of blood as Veronica. The Church commemorates this saint on July 12.

this a mystery, that those in tumult and turmoil do not touch Christ; they only throng about Him. But he who touches Jesus is the one who does not crowd against Jesus, and who does not surround with turmoil the Word within himself. Why does the Lord reveal the woman? First, that He might glorify the woman's faith; secondly, to encourage the ruler of the synagogue that his little daughter will likewise be made whole; and thirdly, to deliver the woman from her great fear. For the woman was afraid that she had, as it were, stolen the healing. This is why the evangelist says that the woman came "fearing and trembling". The Lord, therefore, does not say, "I have made thee whole," but, "thy faith hath made thee whole." Accordingly, go in peace, that is, go and be at rest. What He means is this: "Depart, be at rest, since you have been, until this moment, in grief and turmoil."

35-43. While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? The little girl is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the little girl, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the little girl was lying. And He took the little girl by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha eumi; which is, being interpreted, Little girl, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the little girl arose, and walked; for she was twelve years of age. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them sternly, that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat. Those of the household of the ruler of the synagogue thought that Christ was one of the teachers, which is why they besought Him to come and pray for the little girl. So, then, when she died, they thought there was no longer any need for Him to come, as she had died. But He encouraged the father and said, "Only believe." He did not permit anyone to accompany Him except these three disciples. For Jesus, in His humility,

did not want to do anything to make a display of His power. When He said that the little girl had not died, but was sleeping, they laughed Him to scorn, and thus they could not later say that she had only been unconscious and therefore it was nothing marvelous that He raised her up. That they had laughed Him to scorn for saying that she was not dead would be evidence against any claim they might make that He had not raised up one who was truly dead. He took her by the hand so as to impart His power to her. And He gave her something to eat so as to confirm that her resurrection was real, and not a phantasy.

## CHAPTER SIX

*Concerning the instruction of the apostles.*

*Concerning John and Herod.*

*Concerning the five loaves and two fishes.*

*Concerning the walking on the water.*

1-3. And He went out from thence, and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him. And when the sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judah, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him. He goes to His home town, not unaware that they would scorn Him, but first, so that they would not later be able to say, "If He had come here, we would have believed," and secondly, so as to rebuke their envious attitude. For they ought to have boasted in the Lord as one who brought honor to their native city by His teachings and miracles; but instead they despised Him for His humble birth. Such a great evil is envy! For it always casts good things into darkness, and does not permit the envious even to see them. Even now there are many who slander those of low birth who in every other respect are worthy of honor, and in so doing their thoughts are bad and most ignoble.

4-6. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief. Speaking generally, the Lord said that all prophets are without honor in their own country. For if they were of illustrious birth, they would be envied, and on this account be without honor. But if they were of low birth, they would again be without honor on account of their low birth. He could not do any mighty works there, not because of His weakness, but because of their unbelief. He does not do any mighty works there, to spare them lest it be to their greater condemnation that they do not believe even when they have witnessed

miracles. But in another sense, the working of miracles requires both the power of the one who works them and the faith of those who receive them. There in that city, because those in need of healing lacked the necessary faith, it was not possible for Jesus to work any signs. Thus, "He could do no mighty work" means "It was not possible for Him to do any mighty work."

**6-11.** And He went round about the villages, teaching. And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them authority over unclean spirits; and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no satchel, no bread, no money in their belt: but he shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. The Lord taught not only in the cities but also in the villages, that we might learn not to despise the small, nor always to seek out the big cities, but to sow the word even in the humble villages. He is not the only one to teach, but He also sends out the twelve. He sends them out in pairs to embolden them. For if He sent them out singly, one of them might become fainthearted. Moreover, if He sent them out in groups of more than two, there would not have been enough apostles for all the many villages. Thus He sends them out two by two, for "Two are better than one," as Ecclesiastes says.<sup>1</sup> He commanded them to take nothing with them, neither satchel, nor money, nor bread, teaching them by this means not to love possessions, and so that those who saw these apostles, who owned nothing, would be moved, and would learn from them nonpossessiveness. Upon seeing an apostle taking neither satchel nor bread, even the basic necessities, who would not be moved, and would not also then

divest himself and undertake the life of nonpossession?<sup>2</sup> He instructs them to stay in one house, lest they appear to be unstable, going from one house to the next and gourmandizing. He tells them to shake off the dust as a testimony to those who do not receive them. By this the apostles would show them that they had journeyed a long way on behalf of those ungrateful ones, who nonetheless received no benefit thereby. Or, it would show that the apostles had received nothing from them, not even the dust on their feet, but even this they shook off so that it would be a testimony and a reproof to them. "Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment" than for those who did not receive you. The men of Sodom, having been punished here in this life, will be punished even more fearfully in the next. Yet the apostles were not sent to them. Therefore, those who have rejected the apostles will suffer more harshly than the Sodomites.

**12-13.** And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. Of the four evangelists, only Mark relates that the apostles anointed with oil, but James, the brother of God,<sup>3</sup> says this as well in his general Epistle: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the presbyters of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, in addition to being a help in labors, the fuel of light, and the cause of gladness,<sup>5</sup> oil also means the mercy of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit, for thereby we are freed from labors, and

<sup>2</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "Why do Matthew and Luke, when taken together, say that Jesus commanded them to have neither sandals nor staff [Mt. 10:9-10, Lk. 9:3], while Mark says that they were permitted to have only these things? What answer can be given? Jesus first commanded as Matthew and Luke related, but later He permitted them to wear sandals, and to take a staff, to protect their feet and support their bodies, condescending to their weakness because of the harshness of the journey, as this evangelist has written."

<sup>3</sup> "The brother of God" is the title given by the Church to James, the son of Joseph by his first marriage, and therefore the step-brother of Jesus. This James became the first bishop of Jerusalem, as well as the author of the Epistle of St. James.

<sup>4</sup> Jas. 5:14

<sup>5</sup> The significance of olive oil in the life of the ancient world, and in the Mediterranean world today, is perhaps difficult for others to comprehend. But even western Christians of the twentieth century may have some direct experience of oil as the fuel of light, when they fill their vigil lamps, and as the cause of gladness, when, after fasting strictly according to the ancient rules of the Church, they partake of lenten food together with "wine and oil".

receive light, joy, and spiritual gladness.

**14-16.** And king Herod heard of Him, (for His name was spread abroad,) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elijah. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. This Herod was the son of him who slew the infants. He was tetrarch, but Mark calls him "king", using the name without differentiation. When Herod, then, heard of the miracles of the Lord, and knowing that John, whom he killed without a cause, had been a righteous man, he suspected that John had risen from the dead, and by virtue of his resurrection had acquired the power to work miracles. For previously John had not worked any sign. But after his resurrection, Herod thought that John had received the power to work miracles. Others thought that Jesus was Elijah, for He rebuked many, as when He said, "O faithless generation!"<sup>6</sup> Herod was a coward, and he was so wretched that he was even afraid of the dead.

**17-20.** For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe: and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Mark here gives parenthetically the account of John's death, making use of the opportunity. Some say that Herod stole Herodias away while Philip was still living, and on this account they reprove him as a transgressor of the law, marrying the wife of his brother who was still living. Others say that Philip had died, but had left a daughter. As there was a daughter, Herod ought not to have married the wife of his brother, not even after his death. For the law at that time commanded a man to take his brother's wife when there was no child; but here there was a daughter, and therefore Herod's marriage to

Herodias was unlawful. See how strong is erotic frenzy, that even Herod, who had such reverence and fear of John, would now abandon him just to do the bidding of debauchery.

**21-29.** And a convenient day was come, when Herod on his birthday made a supper for his lords, high captains, and chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of this Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he made an oath unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me at once on a platter the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for the sake of those who sat at table with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison. And brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb. A drinking party is convened. Satan dances by means of the young girl. An unlawful and ungodly and indeed mindless oath is sworn. And the wicked woman says, "Give me at once, at this very hour." And the mindless Herod, driven by lust, is afraid of his oath, and for this reason slays the righteous man. But in this case he ought to have broken his oath, rather than commit such an abomination. For it is not always good to keep one's oath.<sup>7</sup> These things may also be understood in a spiritual sense. Herod represents the fleshly and superficial Jewish people.<sup>8</sup> He married this woman, false and shameless glory, and even today her daughter, erroneous knowledge of the Scriptures, dances and moves among the Jewish people, beguiling them. For they think that they know the Scriptures, but they do not. For they

<sup>6</sup> Here two sentences in the Greek text have been omitted, which define for the eleventh century Greek reader the New Testament Greek words for 'executioner' and 'corpse'.

<sup>7</sup> 'Herod' means 'fleshy' or 'skinlike'. See Bl. Theophylact's comment on Mt. 14:19-21 in Vol. I of the *Explanation*, p. 125.

decapitated John, the speaker of prophecy, not accepting the head of all prophecy, Christ. Though they have the word "of the prophets, they possess the word without its head, which is Christ.

30-33. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by boat privately. And the people saw them departing, and many recognized Him, and ran afoot thither out of all the cities, and arrived first, and came together unto Him. After the apostles had preached, they gathered together unto Jesus, so that we too may learn, when we have been sent forth to serve in some manner, not to run heedlessly like a horse that has bolted, disregarding the One Who sent us, but to know Him as the Master and to return to Him, to tell Him all that we have both done and taught. For we must do, as well as teach. Christ gives rest to His disciples, so that those with authority in the Church again might learn to allow rest for those who toil in preaching the word and in teaching, and not continuously to keep them at their labors. They withdraw into a desert place to avoid vainglory, yet not even there are they able to escape the attention of those seeking the Lord. For the multitude made such haste lest He escape from them, that they even arrived first at the place where Jesus intended to give rest to the disciples. So also must you, O reader, anticipate Jesus, not waiting for Him to call you, but run on ahead so that you yourself arrive there before He does.

34-40. And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And He

commanded them to make all sit down in groups upon the green grass. And they sat down in sections, by hundreds, and by fifties. The Pharisees, in truth ravening wolves, were not shepherding the people, but devouring them. This is why the people left them and gathered together unto Christ the true Shepherd, Who gave them food: first, the food which is more beneficial and precious than all else, His words of teaching, and then He gave them food for the body as well. See what strides the disciples are making in acquiring compassion for others. For they took pity on the multitude, and then approached Christ to ask on their behalf. But the Lord tests them to see if the disciples have realized His power to feed the multitude, and says, "Give ye them to eat." But they reproach Him as if He did not understand how great was their poverty, and the size of the crowd. For they said, somewhat bitterly, "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?" In the end He bids all the people to recline on the grass in groups, for this is the meaning of [the Greek word] *symposiai*, which signifies the separate groups of invited guests around each table. "And they sat down in sections," that is, in various divisions, for [the Greek word] *prasiae* means the various plots of a garden, in each of which a different vegetable is grown.

41-44. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men. He looks up to heaven, both to teach us to ask for our food from God, and not from the devil, which is done by those who seek their food by unrighteous means; and also to show the multitude that so far from being opposed to God [as the Pharisees claimed], He calls upon God. He gives to the disciples, so that by holding the loaves in their own hands, they will not forget the miracle. There are twelve baskets left over for the same reason, so that after each disciple had lifted a basketful on his shoulder, he would remember the miracle. An abundance of His power is displayed: not only are so many fed, but food is even left over. For if Moses gave manna, it was according to each one's need. And what was

left over produced worms.<sup>9</sup> And Elijah fed the widow, but provided only what sufficed.<sup>10</sup> But Jesus, as Lord and Master, provides an overabundance. This is the meaning of the literal account. But the spiritual meaning is this: the five loaves signify the five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The two fish signify the two teachings of the fishermen: the Epistle Book and the Gospel Book.<sup>11</sup> By these are nourished our five senses, signified by the five thousand. But we are not able to eat it all, and there is much left over, which the apostles, though, are able to grasp. For we who are enslaved by the five senses cannot grasp the more difficult thoughts of the law and the Gospel, but the apostles can.

45-52. And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the boat, and to go to the other side towards Bethsaida, while He sent away the multitude. And when He had sent them away, He departed onto a mountain to pray. And when the evening was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea; and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been an apparition, and cried out: for they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Take courage: it is I; be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marvelled. For they had not understood the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened. "He constrained the disciples" for they did not want to be taken away from Him, and could be separated only by compulsion. This, because of their love for Him, and because they were at a loss to know how He would come to them, because He had no boat. He sent away the multitude and went up

<sup>9</sup> Ex. 16:20

<sup>10</sup> III Kings (I Kings) 17:13-16

<sup>11</sup> For use in Orthodox church services, the book of the New Testament is divided and bound separately as two books, called in Greek the *evangelion*, the Gospel, and the *apostolos*, the "Apostle", which includes the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. From these two books, as well as from the Old Testament, readings are made at the appointed times during the Divine Services.

to pray alone, for prayer requires stillness and no disturbance. He permits the disciples to be tested, so that they would learn to endure. This is why He does not go to them at once; but allows them to be tossed by the storm throughout the night, teaching them to persevere and not to hope for rest at the very beginning of their troubles. Observe this as well: at the very moment when He is about to bring an end to their troubles, He casts them into even greater fear. For when they saw Him, they cried out and were troubled, thinking He was some apparition. And immediately He heals them with His voice, saying, "Be not afraid." Then when He enters the boat, He obtains for them a more perfect calm: for "the wind ceased." To walk on water is a great miracle, and truly of God, and the storm and the contrary wind only add to the miracle. The apostles had not understood the miracle of the loaves, but through the miracle of the sea they understood. Hence it appears that Christ permitted them to be tested for this reason too, that since they had not recognized Who He was by the miracle of the loaves, they might do so by the miracle on the sea, and thus receive benefit.

53-56. And when they had passed over, they came unto the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. And when they were come down out of the boat, straightway the people recognized Him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry on beds those that were sick, to where they heard that He was. And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch even if it were but the hem of His garment: and as many as touched Him were made whole. On another occasion, it would seem, the Lord had visited that place. Therefore the evangelist says, "The people recognized Him" and brought to Him their sick. They no longer asked Him to come to their homes, but they themselves brought their sick to Him, beseeching Him "that they might touch even if it were but the hem of His garment." For they had all heard of the miracle of the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, and it had given them greater faith.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

*Concerning the disciples when they ate with unwashed hands.*

*Concerning the transgression of the commandment of God.*

*Concerning the Syro-Phoenician woman.*

*Concerning the deaf man with an impediment of speech.*

1-5. Then came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, who came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands up to the elbow, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, such as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and dining couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? The Lord's disciples had been taught to apply themselves to virtue alone, and not to busy themselves with anything else. Therefore they simply ate, without the business of hand ablutions. The Pharisees wanted to find something to ridicule, and they seize on this. Not able to accuse the disciples of transgressing the law, the Pharisees fault them with transgressing the tradition of the elders. For it is not written in the law to wash one's hands up to the elbow;<sup>1</sup> this is but a tradition passed down to them from the elders.

6-13. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me, and in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Leaving the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, such as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour

thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him surely die: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That which thou mightest have gained from me, is Corban, that is, a gift, he shall be absolved; and ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have handed down: and many such like things do ye. The Lord gives the Jews a sharp rebuke, also bringing forward the prophet as their accuser. For while they had accused His disciples of transgressing the tradition of the elders, He in turn lays against them a far more serious charge, that of transgressing the law of Moses. For the law says, He tells them, Honour thy father and thy mother.<sup>2</sup> But you are teaching sons to say to their parents, "The money that you ask from me is Corban, that is, a gift dedicated to God." For the Pharisees sought to devour the means of the simple, and thus were teaching the sons that if they had something, such as a sum of money, which their parents were asking of them, to say, "I have already consecrated this to God, so do not ask for something dedicated to the Lord." Thus the Pharisees were deceiving the sons, persuading them to dedicate, ostensibly to God, what they possessed, while the Pharisees devoured what was dedicated, and the sons ignored their parents. The Lord, then, lays this charge against them, that for the sake of profiteering they transgress the law of God.

14-23. And when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand: there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the drain, purging everything eaten. And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart

<sup>1</sup> Here Bl. Theophylact interprets the Greek New Testament word, *pygmē*: "that is, 'up to the elbow.' For *pygmē* means 'from the elbow to the tips of the fingers'."

<sup>2</sup> See Ex. 20:12 and 21:16.

of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, mindlessness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man. The Lord here is teaching the people that we ought not to understand in a bodily manner the ordinances of the law concerning food, and here He begins to unveil to some degree the intent of the law. He says that it is not what enters a man that defiles, that is, taints, him, but rather what comes forth from his heart, and He lists those things. He mentions the "evil eye", which can mean either envy or lechery. For evil is the eye of both the jealous man, whose malicious glance casts a curse on the object of his envy, and of the lecher, whose leer brings evil. "Blasphemy" means wanton insolence<sup>3</sup> towards God, as for example when one says, "There is no Divine Providence"—this is blasphemy. And thus pride follows blasphemy in the list, for a proud man, as it were, overlooks and even looks down on God, as when he does something good and ascribes this, not to God, but to his own strength. "Mindlessness" means wanton insolence towards others. All these passions, then, taint the soul as they well up out of it and come forth. To the multitude the Lord spoke less clearly, which is why He said, "He who hath ears to hear, let him hear," meaning "He who understands, let him understand." But the disciples sensed that the Lord had spoken something more profound, and so they approached and asked about the parable, that is, about the Lord's enigmatic speech, (for a parable is a statement with a hidden meaning). To them the Lord first gave a rebuke, saying, "Are ye so without understanding also?" and then He resolved their perplexity.

24-30. And from thence He arose, and went into the region of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet: the woman was a Greek; a Syro-Phoenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the

dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, On account of this saying, go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed. When the Lord had spoken about food and seen that the Jews had not believed, He travelled to the region of the Gentiles. Since the Jews had not believed, salvation was about to come to the Gentiles. But He tried at first to remain unnoticed, so that the Jews might not be able later to accuse Him of having run to the unclean Gentiles. But He could not escape their notice, for it was not possible for Him to escape attention and to remain unrecognized. When the woman, therefore, heard of Him, she showed fervent faith. This is why the Lord does not at once fulfill her request, but withholds the gift, in order to show the steadfast faith of the woman, and how she persevered despite her rebuff. He does this so that we also might learn not to spin away on our heels when we do not immediately obtain what we have asked for in prayer. Instead we should persevere in prayer until we have received an answer. The Lord calls the Gentiles "dogs" because the Jews considered the Gentiles to be unclean. For the "children", that is, the Jews, God had allotted "bread", that is, His beneficence,<sup>4</sup> His gift of good things. For God had showered His beneficence upon the Jews. The Lord is saying; therefore, that the Gentiles ought not to have a share in those good things allotted for the Jews. But when the woman answered wisely, and with faith, she obtained her desire. The Jews, she says, have the whole loaf, that is, they have Thee whole and entire, O Thou Who hast descended from heaven, together with all Thy beneficence. But I am asking only for crumbs, that is, for a small portion of Thy good things. See how the Lord did not say, "My power hath saved thee." But what does He say? "On account of this thy saying," that is, on account of thy faith, "go thy way," thy daughter hath been cleansed. Therefore, you, O reader, learn from this a useful lesson. For when we sin, each one of us is like this "woman", that is, we have a weak and effeminate soul. And then we are also "Phoenician", that is, stained with blood-red, soul-murdering sin, [for

<sup>3</sup> In Greek, *ybris*, often rendered directly into English as 'hubris'.

<sup>4</sup> "Beneficence" is a literal translation of the Greek word, *evergesia*, 'doing good'. God is often referred to in the prayers of the Church as *Evergetēs*, the Benefactor of mankind.

Phoenicia takes its name from the red dye which it produced].<sup>5</sup> And our sinful soul has a demon-possessed daughter; our evil deeds. For evil deeds are of the demons. Since we are sinners, we are called dogs, full of uncleanness. Because of this, we are not worthy to receive the Bread of God, nor to commune of the immaculate Mysteries. But if, through humility, we recognize ourselves for what we are, and acknowledge that we are as dogs, and confess our sins, then our daughter, that is, our demonic deeds, will be healed.

31-37. And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into the man's ears; and He spit, and touched the man's tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephiphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway His ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And He charged them that they should tell no man; but the more He charged them, so much the more they proclaimed it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. He does not linger in the regions of the Gentiles, but quickly departs from them so that, as I have said, He would not give the Jews grounds to say that He transgressed the law by mixing with Gentiles. And having left the region of Tyre and Sidon, He approaches Galilee. There He heals one that was deaf, who had an impediment of speech, whose affliction was from a demon. The Lord first took him aside, for He Who humbled Himself to the level of our poverty was not vainglorious, and for the most part did not wish to work miracles before the eyes of the many, unless it were for the benefit of those who saw. He spat, and touched the man's tongue, showing that every part of His holy flesh was divine and holy, so that even His spittle loosed the bonds of the tongue. Although spittle seems

<sup>5</sup> The name of the region around Tyre and Sidon, Phoenicia, is derived from the Greek word, *phoinix*, which means the dark shades of red. The discovery and earliest use of the dye of this color was first attributed to the Phoenicians, and hence their name. Furthermore, the word *phoinix* is itself derived from the Greek word *phonos*, meaning 'bloodshed' or 'murder'.

worthless, with the Lord all things are marvelous and divine.<sup>6</sup> Looking up to heaven, He sighed, for two reasons: first, as if to beseech the Father to have mercy on the man, and thus to teach us, when we are about to work a miracle, to look to God and to beg from Him the power of miracles; and secondly, to show compassion for the misery of fallen human nature which had been delivered to the devil to be mocked, and which suffered such afflictions. And when He had healed, the Lord is proclaimed by those who had been healed, though He Himself had commanded them to say nothing. We learn from this that when we do good to others, we ought not to ask for applause and acclaim. But when we ourselves have received some good from the hand of another, then we ought to tell it and proclaim those who have done good, though they do not desire it.

<sup>6</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "He also put His fingers in the man's ears, although He was able to work the miracle by word alone, thus showing how rich He was in the activity of divine power, even within His Body. Many passions had befallen human nature because of Adam's transgression, sometimes causing imperfections of bodily members, as well as other afflictions, and thus showing into what state of sickness human nature has been carried down because of sin. Christ enters, and reveals in Himself a perfect human nature, one like that which He had created at the beginning; and by means of this perfect nature, He healed the sicknesses of fallen human nature, which is, nevertheless, of the same essence as Christ's human nature. This is why He opened the man's ears with His own fingers, and bestowed speech to the man's tongue with His own spittle."

*Concerning the seven loaves.*  
*Concerning those who sought a sign.*  
*Concerning the leaven of the Pharisees.*  
*Concerning the blind man.*  
*Concerning the Lord's question to His disciples in Caesarea.*  
*Concerning the Lord's rebuke of Peter.*

1-9. In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for some of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken pieces that were left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away. The Lord had already worked a similar miracle on a previous occasion,<sup>1</sup> and now again He works a miracle, for good reason: the multitude had remained with Him for three days, and everyone's supply of food was exhausted. He did not always perform miracles with food, lest it appear that the multitudes were following Him for the sake of food. He would not have worked this miracle, were it not for the anticipated danger of hunger among the multitude. See how the disciples are still without understanding, not yet having acquired faith in His power which they had seen in His previous miracles. But He does not scold them, thus teaching us also not to give a harsh rebuke to those who are ignorant, but to forgive them their lack of understanding. Consider this

as well, that Christ desires to send no one away hungry, but He wants all to feast sumptuously from His gifts, especially all those who have remained with Him for three days, that is, who have been baptized. Baptism is called 'illumination', and it is performed by means of three immersions; therefore those who stayed with the Lord "three days" signify those who have been illumined by baptism.<sup>2</sup> He takes seven loaves, by which I mean the things of the Spirit, for the number seven is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit perfects and completes all things, and in the number seven both our life<sup>3</sup> and this age<sup>4</sup> are completed. The newly illumined eat and are satisfied, and they leave the leftover pieces, for they are not able to digest all divine truths. But when the Lord worked the miracle with five loaves, there were twelve baskets of broken pieces remaining, for there the multitude numbered five thousand, signifying those who are enslaved to the five senses; and this is why they were not able to eat much, but were satisfied by a little, leaving much left over. But here there are seven baskets, and fewer leftovers, because there are four thousand men, signifying those whose spiritual capacity has been enlarged by their practice of the four virtues<sup>5</sup>, and who therefore can digest more and leave less. What they could not eat is contained by the seven baskets, signifying those things which are the most spiritual and profound. We should also learn from the literal account that we ought to stop eating when we have satisfied our need, and not look for anything more. See how the multitude did not take for themselves the leftovers from the loaves after they had eaten and were satisfied. Instead, the disciples gathered up the remainder, just as they had done in the previous miracle with the five loaves. Likewise we ought to satisfy our hunger in moderation.

10-12. And straightway He entered into a boat with His disciples,

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word, translated here as "immersion", is *katadysis*. Its literal meaning is "sinking and submerging"; by metaphorical extension, it also means "sunset". The Greek word thus provides a more obvious relationship between "three days" and "three immersions" than exists in English.

<sup>3</sup> "Three score years and ten" represent a full life; see Ps. 89:10.

<sup>4</sup> The seven days of creation represent this age; the eighth day is eternity.

<sup>5</sup> The "four universal virtues" are: courage, prudence, righteousness, and self-control. For a description of these, see Bl. Theophylact's Preface to his *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*, op. cit., p. 7.

and came into the region of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. After the miracle with the loaves, He immediately departed to another place, fearing that the multitude, because of this miracle, would cause an uprising and make Him king. The Pharisees ask for a sign from heaven, such as to make the sun or moon stand still, or to send down a lightning bolt, or to change the winds. For they thought that He would not be able to perform a sign from heaven, thinking that it was only by Beelzebub that He was able to work miracles on earth. But the Lord does not grant them their request. For signs from heaven are appointed for another time, namely, at the second coming of Christ, when the powers of the heavens will be shaken and the moon will no longer give out its light. But at the time of His first coming there are no such miracles, but instead everything that He does is full of meekness. Hence "there shall no sign be given unto this generation," that is, no sign from heaven.

13-21. And He left them, and entering into the boat again departed to the other side. Now His disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the boat with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, We have no bread. And Jesus, knowing it, saith unto them, Why reason ye, that ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not remember when I broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of pieces took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among the four thousand, how many baskets full of pieces took ye up? And they said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not yet understand? The Lord leaves the Pharisees because they refuse all correction. One must spend time with those with whom there is hope of correction, but turn away from those who refuse to abandon their wickedness. By divine providence the disciples forgot to bring bread with them, so that by means of the Lord's chastisement they might become better, and come to realize His power. When the Lord told

them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, that is, to beware of their teachings, the disciples thought that the Lord was forbidding the leavening of bread. Therefore they were rightly rebuked for not understanding the power of Christ, Who was able to make bread out of what did not exist. The Lord calls the teaching of the Pharisees and Herodians "leaven" because [like sourdough] it was swelled up with itself and full of old corruption. Anyone who has spent his life in corruption, unable to say anything spiritual that might be of sweetness to the listener, may be said to offer leaven, that is, to offer teaching which corrupts others with its moldering evil, and which in time causes others to regret they had followed that teaching. Who were the Herodians? Recently appeared teachers, who said that Herod was the messiah in whom they should believe.

22-26. And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the village, nor tell it to any in the village. It appears that Bethsaida suffered from great unbelief, which is why Christ cries woe unto it, as Matthew records: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago."<sup>6</sup> The Lord, therefore, comes to Bethsaida, and the people bring a blind man unto Him. But the faith of those who bring the blind man was not genuine, which is why the Lord leads him out of the village and then heals him. He spits upon the eyes of the blind man, and puts His hands on him, so that we might learn that both the word of God as well as the action which follows the word are able to work miracles. For the hand is a symbol of action, and the spit is a symbol of the word, coming as it does from the mouth. The blind man himself did not have perfect faith, which is why the Lord does not at

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<sup>6</sup> Mt. 11:21-22

once make him to see clearly, but only in part, as his faith was only in part. For healing occurs according to one's faith. The Lord commands the man not to go back into the village, because, "as I have mentioned, the inhabitants of Bethsaida were unbelieving and would have caused harm to the soul of the man. The Lord also commands him not to tell anyone what was done to him, lest, by not believing him, the villagers draw down upon themselves greater condemnation. And how often are we not also spiritually blind, living in the village, that is, in this world? But when Christ leads us out of the village, that is, from the world and its affairs, then we are healed. But after we have been healed, He tells us to return no more into the village, but to our home. For the home of each one of us is heaven and the dwelling places there.

**27-30.** And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the villages of Caesarea Philippi: and on the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah, and others, one of the prophets. And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ, And He charged them that they should tell no man concerning Him. First He leads the disciples away from the Jews, and then He asks them about Himself, so that without fear of anyone they might confess the truth. They reply, "Some consider Thee to be John, and others, Elijah." For many thought that He was John risen from the dead; and Herod himself, mindful that John while alive had not worked any miracle, thought that it was John who, by being raised from the dead, had also received the power to work miracles. After asking the disciples about the opinions others had of Him, the Lord asks them for their own opinion. He is all but saying, "Others, in error, think this about Me; but from you let Me hear the truth." How does Peter answer? He confesses that Jesus is the One foretold by the prophets, the Christ. What the Lord said in response to Peter's confession, and how He blessed Peter, Mark omits, lest by telling these things he appear to favor Peter, as Mark was Peter's disciple. But Matthew recounts all these things in detail.<sup>7</sup> The Lord charged them not to speak to anyone concerning Who He was. For He wanted to keep this knowledge hidden,

lest the multitude find this to be a stumbling block and on this account not believe, and thus become liable to even greater punishment.

**31-33.** And He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and by the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him and began to rebuke him. But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. When He saw that they had confessed Him to be the true Messiah, then He also began to reveal to them the mystery of the cross, although not in its entirety. For they did not yet understand what He was saying. They did not yet understand what it meant to "rise again", and they thought that it was better not to suffer at all. This is why Peter began to reproach Him for flinging Himself, as it seemed, towards His own death, although it was within His power not to suffer anything. But the Lord shows that His passion will be for our salvation, and that it is Satan alone who does not want Christ to suffer and thus save mankind. The Lord calls Peter "Satan" because Peter had Satan's thoughts, not wanting Him to suffer, and opposing Him; for 'Satan' means 'the adversary'. The Lord says, "Get thee behind Me," that is, follow My will and do not oppose it. Do not come against Me, but follow behind Me. The Lord rebuked Peter for thinking in human terms. Thinking in a coarse, carnal fashion, Peter wanted the Lord to take His ease, and not to suffer temptations and not to be crucified for the sake of the salvation of the world.

**34-37.** And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever desireth to follow after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever desireth to save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose

<sup>7</sup> Mt. 16:17-19

his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?<sup>8</sup> Since Peter had rebuked Him for wanting to be crucified, the Lord called the people unto Him, and said, in the hearing of all, but directing His words mostly towards Peter, "Do you find fault with Me, Peter, because I take up the cross? I say to you, that neither you, nor anyone else, will be saved unless you die for the sake of goodness and truth." See that Christ does not compel a man to die on a cross against his own will. Instead He said, "Whosoever desireth." For the Lord is saying: I compel no one. I invite him to something good, not to something bad to which I must compel him. Whoever does not want these things is not worthy of them. We can learn what it means to deny oneself if we understand what it means to deny another. He who denies another is he who, when he sees another, such as his brother, or servant, or father, being flogged or even murdered, does not turn towards him and pity him in his suffering, but acts as if he were completely estranged from him. In this same manner the Lord wants us to show no pity towards our own bodies, so that even if we are flogged, or worse, let it make no difference to us. Let him take up his cross, that is, accept a most shameful death, for at that time to die on a cross was considered the most shameful of deaths. But since many were crucified for being bandits, the Lord added to the crucifixion something else: that one ought to have virtue. For this is what it means to "follow Me". Although His command that one give oneself over to death seemed hard and cruel, the Lord straightway shows this commandment is given out of love for mankind. For "whosoever shall lose his life for My sake" shall find life. (But the death of a condemned man, or of one who hangs himself, is not for Christ's sake and brings no such reward.) And, on the contrary, he who appears to have saved his life, far from finding life, shall lose it by not remaining steadfast during his time of martyrdom. Do not say to Me, "But he has saved his life"—it means nothing; and even if you say that he has gained the whole world as well, it is of no benefit. For no one can exchange money for his salvation, for if that were so, a man who had gained the world but lost his soul, could, while burning in the flames of hell, use his money to buy innocence. But at that time and in that place no such trade can be made. And here let us

<sup>8</sup> In this passage of St. Mark, and the following commentary, the same word in Greek, *psyche*, has been translated as either 'life' or 'soul' as it has both these meanings. See also Theophylact's *Explanation of St. Matthew*, op. cit., pp. 30, 61, and 193.

shut the mouths of those who, following Origen, say that all the souls in hell will be restored [and reunited with those in heaven] after they have been punished in accordance with their sins.<sup>9</sup> Let them hear that there is no exchange that can be made there for one's soul. No one is kept in hell as a punishment. Rather, it is the weight of his own sins which holds him there.

38-9:1. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. Intellectual faith does not suffice, but confession of faith with one's mouth is required as well. Since man himself is two-fold, let his sanctification be two-fold as well. For the soul is sanctified by faith, but the body is sanctified by confessing. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed to confess that the Crucified One is his God, of him also shall the Crucified One be ashamed. For the Lord shall judge that man to be an unworthy servant, when He comes with glory, escorted by the angels, no longer in lowly form. At the second coming He will not appear, as He did before, to be of base origin and circumstance, an object of scorn. Since He speaks of His own glory, wishing to show that He is not vainly boasting, He says, "There be some of them that stand here," namely, Peter, James, and John, who shall not die until I have shown them at the Transfiguration the glory with which I shall appear at the second coming. For the Transfiguration was nothing else than a foreshadowing of the second coming, and as He appeared shining then, so will He shine at the second coming, as will also all the righteous.

<sup>9</sup> This false teaching of Origen, *apokatastasis*, the general restoration of all fallen creation, was condemned by the Church as heresy at the Fifth Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 553 A.D. See also the *Explanation of St. Matthew*, op. cit., p.220.

*Concerning the Transfiguration of Jesus.*

*Concerning the lunatic.*

*Concerning those who disputed among themselves,  
who should be the greatest.*

*Concerning the removal of that which causeth temptation.*

2-3.<sup>1</sup> And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up onto a high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. Luke says, "after eight days,"<sup>2</sup> not contradicting Mark, but in full agreement with him. For Luke includes in his reckoning both the day on which the Lord had been speaking, and the day on which He went up onto the mountain; whereas Mark mentions only the intervening six days. The Lord, then, takes the three foremost of the apostles and leads them up onto a high mountain: Peter, because he had confessed Christ, and loved Him; John, because he was especially beloved by the Lord; and James, because he likewise was a great voiced confessor, full of theology. Because of this, he became such a source of grief to the Jews that when Herod wished to please the Jews, he slew James.<sup>3</sup> He leads them up onto a high mountain so that the miracle might be all the more glorious. And He led them "apart by themselves" because He was about to show them a mystery. "Transfiguration" does not mean that His form and features changed, but rather, that there took place the addition of ineffable light to His unchanged form.

4-8. And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three taberna-

cles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. There are many reasons why Elijah and Moses were seen talking with Jesus, but it is enough to mention only two. Since the disciples had said that some of the multitude thought that Jesus was Elijah, while others thought that He was one of the prophets, Jesus shows them Elijah and Moses, the foremost of the prophets,<sup>4</sup> so that they might learn from this how much greater is the Master than His servants. This is the first reason. The second is this: since many were thinking that Jesus, in seeming to set aside the sabbath and transgress the law, was opposed to God, the Lord on the mountain appears with the prophets, one of whom was the Lawgiver, and the other the Zealot. Such prophets as these would not have conversed with one who seemed to abolish the law, if what He said did not please them. Then Peter, who was afraid to descend from the mountain (fearing the Lord's crucifixion), said, "It is good for us to be here and not to go down from here into the midst of the Jews. And even if those who are raging against Thee should come here, we have Moses who defeated the Egyptians, and we have Elijah who called down fire from heaven and destroyed the captains of fifty."<sup>5</sup> What were the prophets discussing with the Lord? His death on the cross. Peter spoke as he did, not knowing what to say; "for they were sore afraid" from the radiance of the light and the ineffable glory. Truly Peter was not thinking rightly: he did not want Jesus to go down to be crucified for our salvation, but to remain forever on the mountain. We ought also to understand these words in a spiritual manner. After the end of this world, which was created in six days, if we are truly His disciples, Jesus will lead us also up to a high mountain, by which I mean heaven, and He will show Himself to us in greater splendor. For on earth He appeared without glory, as the Crucified and the son of a carpenter, but then we will see His glory as the Only-begotten. And we will see both the law and the prophets speaking with Him; that is, then we will

<sup>1</sup> The editors of the King James Version place the last verse of Chapter Eight as the first verse of Chapter Nine; the text used by St. Theophylact does otherwise. For the sake of easy reference, the King James numbering of verses has been kept here.

<sup>2</sup> Lk. 9:28

<sup>3</sup> Acts 12:2

<sup>4</sup> In the Church, Moses is called both Prophet and Lawgiver.

<sup>5</sup> IV Kings (II Kings) 1:9-12

understand all that Moses and the prophets spoke concerning Him, and we will find that their prophecies are in complete agreement with the events which took place. And then we will truly hear the Father's voice when the Father reveals to us the Son, teaching us, "This is My Son." How will He teach us? With the overshadowing cloud, that is, with the Holy Spirit Which is the source of all wisdom.

**9-10.** And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of Man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying to themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. Why did the Lord command the disciples to say nothing of the Transfiguration? So that men would not be scandalized, having heard such glorious things concerning Christ, and then later seeing Him hanging on the cross. But after He had risen from the dead, then it would be fitting to tell of the glorious things concerning Christ which had occurred before the cross. And the apostles "kept that saying to themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." For they did not yet understand, the evangelist is saying, that Christ must rise from the dead.

**11-13.** And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And He answered and told them, Elijah cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how is it written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought? But I say unto you, That Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they pleased, as it is written of him. It was commonly said among the Jews that Elijah would return before the Messiah came. But the Pharisees were not interpreting correctly the prophecies concerning Elijah, but of their own will and evil disposition they hid the truth. For there are two coming of the Messiah: this one, which had already taken place, and the one to come. John the Baptist was the Forerunner of the first coming; Elijah will be the forerunner of the second coming. Christ calls John "Elijah", because, like Elijah, John was an admonisher, a zealot, and a desert-dweller. The Lord therefore refutes the opinion of the Pharisees who held that Elijah would be the forerunner of the first coming of the Messiah. How does He refute? "Elijah cometh first, and restoreth all things: and how is it written of the Son of Man, that He must

suffer many things?" What Christ is saying is this: when Elijah the Tishbite comes, he will make peace with the unbelieving Jews, and will bring them to faith. Thus he will be the forerunner of the second coming.<sup>6</sup> For if the Tishbite, who shall restore all things, were the forerunner of the first coming, how then is it written that the Son of Man shall suffer this and that? Logically it comes to this: if we believe the Pharisees' teaching that Elijah will be the forerunner of the first coming, then the Scriptures are false which say that Christ will suffer. But if these Scriptures are true, then the Pharisees are wrong in teaching that Elijah will be the forerunner of the first coming. For Elijah shall restore all things, and then there will be no Jew who remains an unbeliever, but as many as hear Elijah's preaching will believe. The Lord confounds the opinion of the Pharisees when He says that Elijah, meaning John, has already come, and they did unto him whatsoever they pleased. For they did not believe in him, and in the end his head was cut off, as the trophy of some game.

**14-18.** And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him were greatly amazed, and running to Him, saluted Him. And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever it taketh hold of him, it teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and wasteth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they could not. When He came to His disciples, that is, to the nine that had not gone up onto the mountain with Him, He saw that they were being questioned by the Pharisees. For the Pharisees had seized the opportunity of Jesus' absence to attempt to turn the disciples away from the Lord. The multitude, however, suddenly caught sight of Him, and greeted Him. For they had been longing to see Him, and now they caught sight of Him and greeted Him as if He had just returned from a long journey. Some say that even His appearance had become more beautiful from the light of the Transfiguration, and thus it drew the multitude towards Himself to greet

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<sup>6</sup> See Mal. 4:5.

Him. A man in the crowd spoke in answer to the Lord's question. This man was weak in faith, as even the Lord attests when He says, "O faithless generation," and again, "To him who believes, all things are possible." The man himself attests to his unbelief when he says, "Help Thou mine unbelief." That this man complains against the disciples clearly shows his unbelief. For he ought not to have accused them in front of everyone, but privately.

**19-27.** He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto Me. And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tore him; and he fell on the ground, and swallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Since a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and tore him much, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. The man who approached the Lord accused the disciples of not having the power to heal. But the Lord turns the blame onto him, all but saying, "It is your unbelief which is the cause of your son's not being healed." The Lord does not address only this man, but He directs this saying to all, reproaching all the Jews for their unbelief. For it is likely that many of the bystanders were also scandalized by the disciples' inability to heal. The Lord shows that He welcomes death, when He says, "How long shall I be with you?" meaning, it is a torment to Me to live with you and your unbelief. But He does not just reproach them, but grants the healing as well. He does not desire to heal the son as a show of His power, but rather He proceeds with great humility. See how He does not attribute the healing to His own power, but to the man's faith, when He says, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Furthermore, as He saw a crowd beginning to gather

around, He rebuked the spirit, not wanting to heal in front of the crowd as though for show. When He rebuked the spirit and said, "Come out of him, and enter no more into him," this suggests that because of the man's unbelief, the demon would have again entered into him if it had not been prevented by the Lord's command. The Lord permits the spirit to rend the son, so that all might recognize the attack of the demon, and understand that it would have killed the man if it had not been held in check by the hand of God. A man is thrown by a demon into the fire of anger and desire, and into water, meaning, into the pounding surf of worldly cares. This demon is both mute and deaf. It is deaf, not wanting to hear the words of God; and it is mute, not able to teach others what ought to be taught. But if Jesus, Who is the Word of the Gospel, should take him by the hand, that is, strengthen his power to act, then that man will be freed from the demon. See how God first helps us, and then we ourselves are required to work. For the evangelist says, "Jesus lifted him up"—this is the divine help—"and he arose"—this is the effort of the man himself to do good.

**28-29.** And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast it out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting. The disciples were afraid that they had lost the grace which the Lord had given them, and that this was why they had not been able to cast out the demon. See that out of respect they approached the Lord privately. "This kind"—what kind? This kind which may make their abode in lunatics, or, in general, the whole race of demons, does not come out except through prayer and fasting. Both the one suffering, and the one about to heal, must fast. Both are necessary. Good sense dictates that the one suffering must fast. He must not only fast, but also pray; and he must not only pray, but also fast, for true prayer is rendered when it is yoked to fasting. When the one who prays is not weighed down by the effects of food, his prayer is not burdened and ascends easily.

**30-32.** And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and

were afraid to ask Him. Whenever the Lord spoke of His passion on the cross, He would precede and follow His words with miracles, so that no one could think that He would suffer because He was powerless. And when He spoke sad words, such as, "they shall kill Him," He would add words of joy, "He shall rise the third day," teaching us that gladness always follows after grief, and that we should not anguish needlessly in our sorrows, but should hope for better things.

**33-37.** And He came to Capernaum: and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves along the way? But they were silent: for along the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me. The disciples still were so human in their thinking that they quarrelled with one another over which one of them was the greatest, and was most favored by Jesus. The Lord does not forbid us to desire to become His favorites, for He wants us to desire advancement in the spiritual life. But He does not want us to grasp for honors and privileges, but rather to acquire the heights by humility. The Lord set a little child in their midst, and He wants us also to be like that little child. For a little child neither longs for fame, nor envies, nor bears grudges. And the Lord says, "Not only will you receive a great reward if you yourselves become like little children, but even if you only give honor for My sake to others who have become like little children,<sup>7</sup> you will receive the kingdom of heaven. You receive Me, and by receiving Me, you receive the One Who sent Me." See then what great things are achieved by humility, and by a simple, straightforward, and guileless manner. For both the Son and the Father dwell within us, and, clearly, the Holy Spirit does so as well.

**38-40.** And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one

<sup>7</sup> This means, give honor to the saints and glorify them in Christ's name.

casting out demons in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is for us. John, who was called the son of thunder, was not acting out of jealousy and spite when he forbade the man who was casting out demons, but John wanted all who called upon the name of Jesus to also follow Jesus, and he wanted all the Lord's disciples to be one body. For at the beginning of the Lord's preaching, there were some who were ruled by the love of vainglory and wanted to work miracles themselves. When they saw that the name of Jesus was powerful to do many things, they called upon this name, and indeed they worked miracles, although they were unworthy of divine grace.<sup>8</sup> They were permitted to work miracles because the Lord wished to spread abroad His preaching, even by means of those who were unworthy. What then does the Saviour answer? He does not permit John to forbid the man who was working miracles in His name, but says, "Let him be; for there is no man who shall be able easily to speak ill of Me if he shall work a miracle in My name. For how could one speak ill of Me who uses My name as the source of his own fame, and works miracles by calling upon My name?" The Lord here might appear to contradict Himself. For in another place He says, "He who is not with Me is against Me;"<sup>9</sup> but now He says, "He that is not against us is for us." These words seem contradictory, but they are not. For the first, "He who is not with Me is against Me," was spoken concerning the demons who strive to draw away from God those who are with God, and to scatter them. But here Christ is speaking of men who, on the contrary, by working miracles are leading some to God.

**41-42.** For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. Not only, He says, do

<sup>8</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "Therefore they did not follow Jesus, together with His disciples, on account of the austere and self-denying life of the apostles, and because these men wanted to follow their own will and lead a more careless way of life."

<sup>9</sup> Lk. 11:23

I not forbid such a one who is working miracles in My name, but even if he should give you the smallest thing for My name's sake, and should receive you on account of Me and not just as a human or worldly favor, he shall not lose his reward. The Lord mentions a cup of water because of those who use their own poverty as an excuse. For He says, even if you give something as insignificant as a cup of water, you shall not lose your reward. You will be pleasing to God if you honor one of the little ones, but if you offend a little one, that is, shame him or trip him up for sport, it would be better for you, by comparison, if a millstone were hanged about your neck, for an even worse punishment is in store. He alludes to the real punishment by frightening us with this tangible example.

43-50. And if thy hand should cause thee to fall, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into gehenna, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot should cause thee to fall, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into gehenna, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye cause thee to fall, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into the gehenna of fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another. Having warned those who cause offense that it will be worse for them than if they were cast into the sea, now the Lord exhorts those to whom offense is given to guard themselves against those who are always ready to offend and to tempt. Whether it be your foot, hand, or eye which causes you to fall, which means, even if it is one of your closest friends or relatives, in close relationship to you either by kinship or by necessity, who causes you to fall, cut him off, that is, reject that friendship or kinship to him. The worm and the fire which punish the sinners are each person's conscience and the memory of the shameful things done in this life, for they consume like the worm and burn like fire. "Everyone shall be salted with fire," that is, shall be tested. Paul also says that all things

shall be tried by fire.<sup>10</sup> And every sacrifice, the Lord says, shall be salted with salt. Here He is quoting from Leviticus, where God said, "And every gift of your sacrifice shall be seasoned with salt."<sup>11</sup> It is good for you to season your sacrifices with the salt of God, which means, do not make offerings that you have not carefully prepared to please God. "Salt" is also what the Lord calls the apostles, and in general, all those with the duty to preserve others from corruption. Just as salt preserves meat, and prevents worms from breeding within it, so do words of teaching, if they are astringent, shrink the fleshliness of carnal men, and prevent the worm that never sleeps from breeding within them. But if the teacher is without salt, that is, if he has no astringent to preserve us from rot, with what shall he be salted, that is, be seasoned? Have salt therefore in yourselves, that is, have the pleasing and preserving grace of the Holy Spirit, so that you may have peace one with another. For he who is bound to his neighbor by love has shrunk his carnal self, and it is he who "has salt", and he is at peace with his brother.

<sup>10</sup> See I Cor. 3:13.

<sup>11</sup> Levit. 2:13

*Concerning those who asked  
whether it was lawful to divorce one's wife.  
Concerning the rich man who questioned Jesus.  
Concerning the sons of Zebedee.  
Concerning Bartimaeus, the blind man.*

1-9. And He arose from thence, and cometh into the region of Judea beyond Jordan; and the people gather around Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again. And the Pharisees came to Him, and, testing Him, asked, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife. And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses allowed a man to write a bill of divorce, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Because of the hardness of your heart He wrote you this statute. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. The Lord often left Judea because of the malice of its inhabitants, but now He returns to their region because the time of His passion was approaching. He does not yet go up to Jerusalem, but instead He goes into that part of Judea near the border, to bring benefit to the simple and guileless multitude. For Jerusalem was indeed a workshop of evil, because of the cunning deceit of the Pharisees. Behold now their evil cunning, how they test and tempt the Lord, not letting Him alone so that the multitude could hear and believe Him, but always approaching and trying to catch Him in His words and refute Him by their questions. For they asked Him a question, on each side of which lay a trap: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" If He should say that it is lawful, they would answer Him, "Why then did you say that, except for reason of adultery, it is not lawful to divorce?"<sup>1</sup> But if He should say that it is not lawful, they would accuse him of opposing the

teachings of Moses.<sup>2</sup> Christ, therefore, Who is Wisdom, replies to them with an answer that escapes both of their traps. He asked them what Moses had commanded them to do, and when they said that Moses had permitted them to divorce their wives, the Lord explained the meaning of this law to them. The Lord says, "It was not Moses who was harsh when he gave you this law; rather, he wrote this law because of the hardness of your hearts." For God, knowing the inhumanity of the Hebrews, and that one who had begun to hate his own wife might easily kill her, permitted a man who was not happy with his wife to divorce her. But it was not so from the beginning; instead it was God's will and design to join spouses together and make them one, so that they even leave their parents behind them. See what the Lord is saying: God does not want a man to have many marriages so that he leaves one woman and takes another for his wife, and then leaves this one and is joined to a third. If this were so, He would have made one man to have many wives. But this did not happen; instead "God made them male and female," and He commanded that one man be joined to one woman. But we may also understand this passage another way; the word of teaching, casting good seed into the soul of a believing man, acts like a husband towards his wife who receives him. For the word desires to bring benefit to the soul which receives it. And so the word of teaching leaves his father, that is, the elevated mind, and he leaves his mother, ornate language, and cleaves to his wife, which is the soul being taught. To bring her benefit, the word of teaching humbly comes down to meet that soul, teaching her with simple words and thoughts. Thus the two become one flesh, that is, the soul believes that the Word of God became flesh, and no human thought can tear asunder the soul from her belief.

10-12. And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall divorce his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall divorce her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. Once again the disciples too were scandalized. This is why they approached and asked Him again, because their reasoning was not yet sound. He answered them and said, "Whoever divorces his wife

<sup>1</sup> Mt. 5:32

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 24:3

and marries another woman, commits adultery with that second woman. Likewise, a woman who leaves her own husband and marries another becomes an adulteress.”

13-16. And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. How great is the faith of the multitude, who believed that Christ would bless those brought to Him just by laying His hands on them. But the disciples thought that it was beneath Christ’s dignity to have children brought to Him, and they tried to stop those who were approaching. What does Christ do? To teach them to have more humble thoughts, and to trample down worldly arrogance, He not only receives the children, but He gathers them up in His arms. He shows that He welcomes those who are guileless by saying, “for of such is the kingdom of God.” See that He did not say that the kingdom is “of these”, but “of such as these”; that is to say, the kingdom of God belongs to those who by labor and struggle have acquired that guilelessness which little children have by nature. For a little child does not envy or bear grudges, and even when he has been disciplined by his mother, he does not stand off aloof from her. But even if she is wearing rags, he would rather have her than a queen. Likewise he who lives a virtuous life holds nothing in higher honor than he does his Mother, who is the Church, not even pleasure who reigns as queen over so many. Therefore Christ gathers up in His arms all such as these, saying to them, “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden.”<sup>3</sup> And He blesses them, saying, “Come, ye blessed of My Father.”<sup>4</sup> The kingdom of God is both the preaching and the promise of good things, Christ is here saying. Therefore whoever accepts the preaching of God as a little child, that is, without any doubts or unbelief, enters into the kingdom of God, and into

those good things which he has even now accepted by faith.

17-22. And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and he knelt before Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments? Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, and whatsoever thou hast, sell and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had many possessions. Some accuse this young man of being underhanded and cunning, testing the Lord. But it is not so. He loved riches, but he was not a tempter. Hear what the evangelist says: “Then Jesus beholding him, loved him.” Why does Jesus say in reply to him, “There is none good but One”? Because the young man had approached Jesus as if Jesus were only a man, and only one among many teachers. This is what Christ is saying: If you call Me good thinking that I am a teacher, I say that no man is good by comparison to God. But if you call Me good thinking that I am God, why then do you call Me Teacher? By these words Christ wished to draw the young man up to a higher understanding, so that he would recognize Jesus as God. But Jesus also said this to correct something else. He wanted to teach him that when we speak with some one, we should not speak words of flattery. Instead, understanding that God is the root and source of all goodness, we should give honor to Him alone. I marvel at this young man; for all the others who approached the Lord did so to obtain healing from diseases, but he came seeking to inherit eternal life, although he was suffering from the most terrible of passions, the love of money. Because of this, when he heard the words, “Go thy way, and whatsoever thou hast, sell and give it to the poor,” he went away grieved. See that the Lord did not say, “Go thy way, and whatsoever thou hast, sell it off and give it away a little at a time,” but

<sup>3</sup> Mt. 11:28

<sup>4</sup> Mt. 25:34

instead, "sell it and give it away all at once."<sup>5</sup> And do not give it to those who are dissolute and prodigal, but to the poor. And come and follow Me, that is, practice every other virtue as well. For there are many who are without possessions, but have no humility; or who are humble, but are drunkards or have some other vice. This is why the Lord says: Sell, and give to the poor, and follow Me when you have taken up your cross, that is, when you have prepared yourself for death for My sake. "And he was sad at that saying and went away: for he had many possessions." The word "many" is not superfluous here, for it is not the same for those with many possessions as it is for those with few, for the fetters of many possessions are stronger and more terrible. And further, if someone has not yet grown up and is childish and frivolous in his thoughts, and has an unsettled mind, let him sell his possessions, such as his anger and his desires and all the evil things which spring from them. And let him give these things, nay, hurl them, to the demons, who are poor, being without any good thing and without the wealth of goodness which comes from God. Then let him follow Christ. For one who has cast off the wealth of his sins to the demons is he who is able to follow Christ. "Turn away from evil"<sup>6</sup>—this means to cast off one's wealth of wickedness to the destitute host of demons; "and do good"—this means to follow Christ and take up one's cross.

**23-27.** And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hard it shall be for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. It is not riches that are

<sup>5</sup> That this is the meaning of the Lord's words "sell" and "give" is more apparent in the Greek of St. Mark's Gospel, where the imperative forms of the verbs for "sell" and "give", *pôlēson* and *dōs*, are in the aorist tense, which implies a single, finite action, rather than a continuous, ongoing action.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 34:14

evil. It is instead those who hold onto wealth who deserve to be accused. For one ought not to hold onto riches, that is, to keep them in one's possession, but instead one should use them for what is necessary. For, as the saying goes, riches are for use, not for safekeeping.<sup>7</sup> Those who keep their riches under lock and key are those who will find it hard to enter the kingdom of God. Understand "hard" here to mean "impossible". For it is impossible for the rich man to be saved. This is clear from the example which the Lord gives, saying, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." For it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. "Camel" means either the animal or the heavy rope used on board large ships. It is impossible for a man to be saved as long as he is rich. But with God this is possible. For Christ said, "Make friends for yourselves from the mammon of unrighteousness."<sup>8</sup> Do you see how this becomes possible when we listen to God? For men it is impossible, that is, it is impossible when we think with human thoughts. Why were the disciples astonished at these words? Certainly not because they themselves were rich. It seems to me that they were agonizing for all mankind, for they had already begun to be compassionate towards all. Some are perplexed how Christ could say, "With God all things are possible."<sup>9</sup> We answer that when He says "all things" He means "all things that have being". Sin does not have being, for it is without essence and substance. Moreover, sin does not come from strength, but from weakness, for the Apostle Paul says, "When we were yet without strength, Christ died."<sup>10</sup> And again David says, "Their infirmities increased."<sup>11</sup> Therefore sin, which is weakness, is something not possible for God. But, they would say, is God not able to make what is real into something which is not real? To which we answer that God is truth. To make something real into something unreal is falsehood. How then can truth make falsehood? For it would first have to destroy its own

<sup>7</sup> A play on words: the Greek word *chrēmata*, translated here as "riches", is derived from the verb *chraomai*, meaning "to use".

<sup>8</sup> Lk. 16:9

<sup>9</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "Surely it is not possible for God to sin."

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 5:6

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 15:4

nature. It reduces to this: is God able not to be God? See how ridiculous the question is.

**28-31.** Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first. Although Peter left but a few things, here he calls them "all", that is, everything. For even a few things create a strong bond of attachment. Therefore blessed is he who leaves even his few things. Although Peter alone asked the question, the Lord gives a universal answer, saying, "Every one who has left wife or father." The Lord said these things, not so that we would leave our fathers helpless, or divorce our wives, but to teach us to put piety towards God before any relationship of flesh. Because the proclamation of the Gospel had kindled war, and fathers were about to betray their own children on account of piety, the Lord says, "Whosoever shall leave kinships of the flesh, and in general, everyting of the flesh, for the Gospel's sake, shall receive a hundredfold in this age, and in the age to come, eternal life." So then, will he receive a hundred wives? Yes, he will, and never mind the jects of that accursed Julian.<sup>12</sup> Tell me, what does a wife do to serve the needs of her husband in his house? She takes complete care of her husband's meals and clothes, so that he need not give any thought to these things. The same is true of the apostles: see how many women there were who took care of their food and clothing, and served them so that the apostles gave no thought to anything but the Word and the teaching. Likewise, the apostles had many fathers and mothers, meaning all those who had love and affection for the apostles; and Peter, who left one house, later had all the houses of his disciples as his own. And to this day, he has glorious houses all over the earth: temples bearing his name. But, what is more important, the saints shall

<sup>12</sup> Julian the Apostate, nephew of St. Constantine the Great, and Emperor from 361 to 363 A.D., abandoned Christianity and attempted to restore pagan religion to the Empire.

inherit all these things "with persecutions", that is, they will be persecuted and afflicted, not taking their ease. Therefore, though seeming to be last in this world because of persecutions and afflictions, they will be first because of their hope in God. But the Pharisees, who held the first place, became last, while those who left all and followed Christ became first.

**32-34.** And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, saying, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem: and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again. Why does He foretell the things that will happen to Him? He does this to prepare and to calm the minds of the disciples, so that having heard of these things beforehand they would more easily endure them, and not be overwhelmed all at once in their anguish. He also foretold these things so that they would know that He suffered them of His own will. For although He knows these things beforehand, and is able to flee from them, He does not do so, and thus He makes it abundantly clear that He gives Himself over to His sufferings willingly. The Lord takes the disciples aside privately, to speak with them alone. For His Passion is a mystery to be revealed only to those closest to Him. And this is why on the road He leads the way before them all, wanting to separate His disciples from the rest of the crowd. But also, by leading the way, He shows that He hastens to His Passion, and does not evade His death which is for our salvation. And although He lists all these sorrowful things that will happen, yet there is one consolation, that He will rise on the third day.

**35-39.** And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we want that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask. And He said unto them, What do ye want that I should do for you? They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the

cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can. Another evangelist says that the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Christ.<sup>13</sup> It is likely that both events took place. The apostles were embarrassed, and had their mother go first, and then they themselves approached Christ in private. This is what the evangelist means here when he says that they "come unto Him", that they approach Him in private, apart from the others. Let us learn what it was they asked. They thought that His going up to Jerusalem meant that He was going to ascend the throne of an earthly kingdom, and that after He had become king He would suffer those things which He said He would suffer. With this understanding, they are asking to sit at His right hand and His left. This is why the Lord rebukes them for asking for something foolish. "Ye know not what ye ask," He says. You are thinking that My kingdom is an earthly kingdom, and you are asking for an earthly throne. But it is not so; rather, these things are beyond your understanding. To sit at My right hand is something so great that it goes beyond what even the angelic hosts can do. You are craving honor and glory, but I am calling you to die. By "baptism" and "cup" He means the cross. For a cup of wine is something a man gladly accepts, and it quickly puts him to sleep. And baptism is something which is done to cleanse sins. But James and John, not understanding what He said, gave their promise, thinking that He was speaking of an actual cup of wine, and the washing of the body which the Jews performed before they ate.

39-40. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized with shall ye be baptized: but to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. Martyrdom, He is saying, will be yours, and you will die for Truth's sake.<sup>14</sup> But to sit at My right hand and at My left is not Mine to give. Two questions may be asked: first, has it been prepared for anyone to sit there? Second, is the Master of all unable to bestow this

<sup>13</sup> Mt. 20:20

<sup>14</sup> For bold confession of the Truth, James was beheaded in Jerusalem in 45 A.D., and John was cruelly tortured in Rome and then exiled to the island of Patmos.

seat? In answer we say that no one will sit at His right or at His left. Although in many places of Scripture you hear mention of sitting upon a seat in heaven,<sup>15</sup> understand that this refers to great honor, not a chair. "It is not Mine to give" has this meaning: it is not for Me, the Just Judge, to bestow this honor as a favor, for that would not be just. Instead, this honor has been prepared for those who have contested and struggled for it. It is as if a just king had set a day for a contest of athletes, and then some of his friends come to him and say, "Give us the crowns." The king would say, "The crowns are not mine to give; rather, a crown is prepared for that contestant who shall compete and win." So too with you, O sons of Zebedee, you shall be martyrs for My sake; but if there is one who, along with martyrdom, exceeds you in every virtue, he shall precede you in honor.

41-45. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are thought to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. The disciples are still subject to human weaknesses, and here they are stung with envy. This is why the ten were displeased with the two. When did they begin to be indignant? When the ten saw that they had not been received by the Lord, and thought they had been pushed away, then they began to be indignant. For as long as the ten were shown honor by the Lord, it did not bother them that the Lord held these two in special honor. But here when they see these two asking for honor, the others could no longer endure it. Although they act in this imperfect way now, later you will see each one of them conceding the first place of honor to the other. Christ heals them, first calming them by calling them to Himself, and then showing them that to grasp for honors and to desire the chief place is the behavior of Gentiles. For the Gentile princes lord it over others in a tyrannical and domineering

<sup>15</sup> Mt. 19:28, Lk. 13:29, Eph. 2:6, etc.

manner. But it is not so with My disciples, He says; instead let him who would be great serve all the others, for the mark of a great soul is to endure all things and to serve everyone. The example of this is near at hand: for the Son of Man Himself did not come to be served but to serve, and, what is even greater, He came to give His life as a ransom for many. For what could be greater and more marvelous than a man who not only serves, but who even dies for the sake of the one he serves? Yet the Lord's serving and His humble lowering of Himself to be with us has become the exaltation and the glory of Him and all creation. For before He became man, He was known only to the angels, but after His incarnation and crucifixion, His glory is even greater and He reigns over all the earth.

**46-52.** And they came to Jericho; and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him that he should be silent: but he cried out all the more, O Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Take courage, rise; He calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way. Matthew speaks of two blind men. It is likely that there were two who were healed, but only the more remarkable of the two is mentioned here by Mark. See how the multitude gives such honor to Jesus that they rebuke the blind man who cries out, as if Jesus were a king passing by on the road. The Lord first questions the blind man so that no one could say that the blind man wanted one thing, but the Lord gave him something else. The blind man is a grateful soul; for when he had been healed, he did not leave the Lord, but followed Him. This can also be understood in a spiritual manner. Jericho is this low

place.<sup>16</sup> Blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sitting here in Jericho is human nature, a son of Him Who is above all honor, God.<sup>17</sup> Human nature, then, cried out to Jesus as He passed through Jericho, that is, through this life. Jesus took pity on human nature, and because of its faith in Him, He made it whole, and it put off the old garment of sin. Having been made whole, human nature followed Jesus in the way, that is, striving to keep Christ's commandment in this life. It is here that we must follow Christ: thereafter, there is no possibility of striving to keep the commandments.

<sup>16</sup> Jericho is situated on a low plain near the River Jordan, neither far from, nor much higher than, the Dead Sea, and it is much lower in elevation than Jerusalem.

<sup>17</sup> Theophylact here plays upon the meaning and sound of the Hebrew name Bartimaeus. 'Bar', in Hebrew, means 'son of', and 'Timaeus' is quite similar in sound to the Greek word *timē*, meaning 'honor'.

*Concerning the colt.  
Concerning the withered fig tree.  
Concerning the moneychangers who were cast out of the temple.  
On having boldness towards God.  
On not remembering wrongs.  
Concerning the chief priests and elders who questioned the Lord.*

1-6. And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose it, and bring it. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of it; and straightway he will send it hither. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside in a place where two ways met; and they loose it. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. Jesus had entered Jerusalem on many other occasions, but His entrance was never so public and highly visible as now. Previously He had kept Himself hidden because of their spite. But now the time of His Passion was at hand, the time which He Himself had ordained, and so He entered the city with more splendor. The Lord did this so that they might understand His glory if they wanted to understand, and so that by seeing in Him the fulfillment of the prophecies, they might know that He is truly God. But if they did not wish to understand, it would be to their greater condemnation that not even with such glorious miracles did they believe. See just how many miracles there are here: He said to them, "Ye shall find a colt." He told them that they would be prevented from taking the colt, and that when they then said, "The Lord hath need of it," they would be allowed to take it. It was no small thing that the apostles were permitted to lead the colt away. It would not have happened if some divine power had not compelled the owners of the colt to let the animal go, since the owners, more likely than not, were poor farmers. Learn that the Lord did not do

these things without reason, nor was He truly in need of the colt, for many times He had gone about all of Galilee and Judea on foot. But He did this to show that He was about to ride upon the Gentile people who were stubborn and untrained, bound by their own sins in the open road, that is, in this life, and standing outside the door, that is, outside the Church. But the disciples loosed this Gentile people from their sins by means of baptism and faith. And the Lord was carried by this people after the apostles had laid upon them their garments, that is, all the gracefulness and modesty of virtue. Formerly the Gentiles had lived indecently, often going naked and doing what was unlawful and sinful.<sup>1</sup> But when they were led by the apostles, they learned to walk about decently and modestly, and thus Christ is carried even by them. And surely the former owners of this colt, who attempted to prevent the apostles, are none other than all the demons. But the apostles prevail over them as well.

7-10. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on it; and He sat upon it. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. As long as the multitude remained incorrupted, they recognized what was right. Therefore they give honor here to Jesus, each one according to his ability. Let us understand the meaning of the hymn of praise which they sang. They took this hymn from the Psalms of David. Some say that "Hosanna" means "Save now"; others say that it means "a hymn". The first interpretation is better. For in Psalm 117 it is written, "O Lord, save now;"<sup>2</sup> which in Hebrew is written "Hosanna." The kingdom of David means the kingdom of Christ, both because the Lord was descended from the seed of David, and because the name "David" is said to mean "mighty of hand", or "skilled of hand". For who else is so skilled of hand as the Lord, Whose hands worked so many miracles? May we also lay down

<sup>1</sup> In the pagan Greek and Roman world, nakedness was prevalent in private, public, and religious life, e.g. public baths, athletic games, Bacchanalia, and orgies.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 117:25 of the Greek Septuagint: "Ο Kyrie, σῶσον δέ."

our garments, that is, our flesh (for the flesh is the garment of the soul), and let us make our flesh subject to the Lord. And let us strew the course of our life with branches cut from trees, which means, let us imitate the lives of the saints. For the saints are like trees [planted by the rivers of waters<sup>3</sup>], and he who cuts branches from these trees is he who imitates the virtues of the saints. And let all our actions be to the glory of God, both those which come first and those which follow. For there are some who at first made a good beginning in life, but their life that followed was not to the glory of God.

**11-14.** And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if perhaps He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And His disciples heard it. Jesus went into the temple but then went out,<sup>4</sup> showing that He was abandoning it as already empty and plundered. He went out to Bethany, which means 'house of obedience'. For He leaves those Jews who are disobedient and hard-hearted, and comes with His disciples to those who will obey Him. And let us understand the things concerning the fig tree. For there is much here that might seem odd. First, was He in fact hungry that morning? Second, if it was not the season for figs, why was He looking to find figs? Third, what was the reason for giving a punishment to an insensible plant? It is said that He did everything here according to divine economy. Although He had often worked miracles to do good to men, the disciples had not yet seen His power to punish. Therefore here He displays His power to punish in regards to a plant, wanting to show His disciples that if He wished, He could destroy in an instant those who were about to crucify Him. And it

<sup>3</sup> See Ps. 1:3.

<sup>4</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "Jesus went into the temple and looked about upon all things in the temple, thus providing opportunity for the disrespectful to amend their ways. But later when He came into the temple, He dealt with them more severely because they had not amended their ways. But on this occasion He went in, and then went out..."

was a great miracle which He performed, for the fig tree has more sap than almost any other plant, and yet such a succulent tree dried up at once. By divine economy He is hungry on this morning and hearkens to His flesh; He looks for a fruit which is not in season, so that, as I said above, He might show that He also has the power to punish.<sup>5</sup> This fig tree is a symbol of that assembly of the Jews which had only leaves, that is, which had the law which gave only shade to them, but which bore no fruit. Jesus hungered for their salvation, for He said, "My food is to do the will of My Father."<sup>6</sup> It is the will of God that sinners turn back and repent. Therefore, since this assembly did not bear the fruit of repentance, God's blessing was withheld and it withered, for thereafter the unrepentant Jews had neither prophet nor teacher.

**15-18.** And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called by all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. John also relates how Jesus cast the sellers out of the temple, but he gives his account at the beginning of his Gospel,<sup>7</sup> while Mark gives his account at the end.<sup>8</sup> It is likely that Jesus did this twice, which is to the greater condemnation of the Jews. For though the Lord

<sup>5</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "St. John Chrysostom says that Jesus did not go to the fig tree looking for figs. This could not be, he explains, since it was not yet the season for figs, as reported by the evangelist here. But the evangelist himself, who said this, adds that Jesus came 'if perhaps He might find any fruit thereon.' But you must understand that this is the thought the disciples had, thinking that Christ came to the fig tree looking for figs, for the disciples were still immature in their understanding. The evangelists often describe the thoughts of the disciples. Just as this was their thought, so too it was their thought that Jesus cursed the fig tree because it bore no fruit. Why did He curse a plant? Not because it had sinned, but so that His disciples might learn that He also had the power to punish."

<sup>6</sup> See Jn. 4:34.

<sup>7</sup> Jn. 2:14-17

<sup>8</sup> See also Mt. 21:12-13.

would do the same thing many times, they did not repent and amend their ways. Jesus calls the temple a den of thieves because of the greed for money, for thieves lust after money. Therefore, since these buyers and sellers, to make a profit, were selling off the animals which had been offered for sacrifice, the Lord calls them thieves. The "money changers" [in Greek, *kollybistai*] take their name from the *kollybos*, a copper coin of small denomination. The Lord sets over them as their accuser the prophet Isaiah himself, who said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer."<sup>9</sup> And may it not happen that we ourselves are cast out of the temple. For there are many of us who go into our own temples, and sell what is good and buy worse. And there are others who have tables full of coins, that is, those who manage and administer the affairs of the church, but who do everything for the sake of profit. And the seats of those who sell the doves are overturned as well, meaning that the Lord drives out from their episcopacy those bishops who sell the gifts of the Spirit (for the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit): a bishop who ordains because of a money bribe is deposed. But also, anyone who trades the grace and purity of his baptism to the devil can be said to have sold his dove, and he too will be cast out of the temple.

**19-23.** And when evening was come, He went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Matthew says that "immediately the fig tree withered away; and when the disciples saw it, they marvelled."<sup>10</sup> Do not be perplexed when you hear Mark say here that on the next day they saw the withered fig tree. Understand Matthew's account this way: "Immediately the fig tree withered away." Stop here. Then Matthew continues, "And when the disciples saw it, they mar-

<sup>9</sup> Is. 56:7

<sup>10</sup> Mt. 21:19

velled." When did they see it? Not immediately, but on the next day. Understood in this manner, there is no perplexity. See here how Christ shows again that He is God. For the Lord says through the prophets, "I willer the green tree, and cause the dry tree to flourish."<sup>11</sup> Marvel at the divine love for man, how God even gives the power to work miracles, a power which He alone by nature possesses, to us who by faith have become like unto Him, so that we are even able to move mountains. The mountain is also the proud mind, high and rugged. Therefore, a proud man should rebuke this mountain, this passion of pride which besets him and strives to drive him away from God's protection and providence; for it is pride that makes a prond man say that he can accomplish all things by himself without God's help. Such a man ought to say to his pride, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, that is, go back among worldly, unbelieving men who are in the sea of this life." And a man who casts away his pride does not doubt, that is, he is not divided and separated from God.<sup>12</sup> But a proud man is parted from God when he says, "I have received nothing from God, and I have no need of any alliance with Him."

**24-26.** Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye ask, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that also your Father Who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father Who is in heaven forgive your trespasses. He who in his innermost being believes in God lifts up his whole heart to God and, in the words of David, he pours out his soul before God.<sup>13</sup> He who has lifted up his heart to God is united to God, and his heart is thus made warm and has full assurance that it may obtain its request. Whoever has experienced this will understand. I think that all those who pray with at least a moderate degree of attention experience this. This is why the Lord says, "You shall receive whatsoever you ask with faith." He who believes gives his whole self to God,

<sup>11</sup> Ezekiel 17:24

<sup>12</sup> The Greek for "shall not doubt", *mē diakrithē*, means literally, "shall not be divided or separated."

<sup>13</sup> See Ps. 61:8.

speaking to God with tears, and, as it were, clasping the feet of the Master in prayer. Do you want to know another way to receive what you ask for? Forgive your brother, if he has sinned against you in any way. Do you see how easy it is to obtain God's gifts?

27-33. And they come again to Jerusalem: and as He was walking in the temple, there come to Him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and say unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? And who gave Thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? Answer Me. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men held that John was indeed a prophet. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We do not know. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things. Furious that Jesus had cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, they came to Him and asked by what authority He did these things, thinking to put Him at a loss for words. In effect they said to Him, "Who are You to do these things? Have You been appointed a teacher? Have You been ordained high priest?" They said this, striving to render Him speechless, so that they could lay hands on Him. For if He should answer, "I do these things by My own authority," they could stone Him for setting Himself up against God. But if He should answer, "I do these things by God's authority," they could drive the multitude away from Him, for the multitude believed that Jesus was God. Therefore the Lord asks them about John, not without reason, nor simply to engage them in debate. Since John had given testimony to Christ, the Lord asks these evildoers about John, so that if they should accept that John was from God they would then be compelled to accept as well John's testimony as to Christ. So when these evil-minded men were at a loss for words, then Jesus says, "Neither do I tell you." He did not say, "Neither do I know what to tell you," but, "I do not tell you," that is, since you do evil, I will not honor you with an answer.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

*Concerning the parable of the vineyard.*

*Concerning those who asked about the tribute to Caesar.*

*Concerning the Sadducees.*

*Concerning the scribes.*

*Concerning the questioning of the Lord.*

*Concerning the need to beware of the hypocrites.*

*Concerning the widow.*

1-9. And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and dug a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. The vineyard is the people, whom the Lord has planted. As David says, "Establish this vine which Thy right hand hath planted."<sup>1</sup> And Moses said, "Bring them in and plant them in Thy holy mountain."<sup>2</sup> The hedge is the law, which forbade them to mingle with the pagan nations. The tower is the temple, which could be seen from every direction. The winepress is the altar, where the blood of sacrifices was poured out. This people was "let out to husbandmen", that

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<sup>1</sup> See Ps. 79:16. With these same words the bishop prays for the people during a hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

<sup>2</sup> See Ex. 15:17.

is, leased to the teachers and rulers of the Jews for a term of years. The Lord sent forth one servant, that is, the prophets at the time of Elijah, such as Micah, whom Sedekiah, the false prophet, struck.<sup>3</sup> He sent forth a second servant, the prophets at the time of Hosea and Isaiah, and they cast stones at them and wounded them in the head, thereby committing the height of outrage and insult. And He sent forth a third servant, those prophets such as Daniel and Ezekiel at the time of the captivity in Babylon. Finally God sent forth His own Son, Who became a man out of love for man, and God said, "They will reverence My Son." God did not say this in ignorance of what would happen, but He spoke of what they ought to do and what was fitting for them to do. But when those wicked husbandmen learned that this was the Son of God, they cast Him out of the vineyard, that is, outside of Jerusalem, and killed Him. For the Lord was crucified outside of the city. Therefore the Lord of the vineyard, the Father of the Son Who was slain, indeed the Son Himself Who was slain, shall destroy those husbandmen, handing them over to the Romans.<sup>4</sup> And the Lord shall give His people to other husbandmen, that is, to the apostles. Do you want to see how the apostles cultivated the vineyard? Read the Book of Acts, and you will learn of the three thousand and of the five thousand who all at once believed and bore fruit for God.<sup>5</sup>

**10-12.** And have ye not read this Scripture: The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way. Through all these things, the Lord shows that the Jews who do not believe are rejected, but the Gentiles who believe are accepted. For the stone is the Lord Himself, and the builders are the teachers of the people. But He Whom the builders rejected has become the head of the corner, the Head of the Church. For the corner is the Church which joins together and makes one the Jews and the Gentiles, just as a corner mediates and

<sup>3</sup> III Kings (1 Kings) 22:24

<sup>4</sup> The Roman army destroyed Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D., after a fierce and bitter war against the Jews.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 2:41, 4:4.

joins two walls to each other. This cornerstone, the Church, is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes, we who believe. Yet among those who do not believe, the Church and even its miracles are slandered. But the Church itself is a miracle, formed out of miracles, the Lord working together with the apostles and "confirming the word with signs following."<sup>6</sup>

**13-17.** And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to eaten Him in His words. And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest for no man: for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teacheſt the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Bring Me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at Him. We have spoken elsewhere concerning the Herodians,<sup>7</sup> that they were a newly appeared sect who taught that Herod was the Messiah, because during Herod's time the line of the Judaic kings had come to an end.<sup>8</sup> Others say that here the "Herodians" mean the soldiers of Herod whom the Pharisees had summoned, so that they could witness the words that Christ would speak, and then could arrest Him and lead Him away. See their evil disposition, how they try to deceive the Lord with flattery. They say, "We know that Thou regardest not the person of men," implying that He showed no special reverence even for Caesar. But this was only a trick, designed to trap Him however He might answer their question. For should He say that it was lawful to pay tax to Caesar, they could say to the people that He was leading them into slavery. But if He should say that it was not lawful, they could accuse Him of leading the people in rebellion against Caesar. But He Who is the very fount of

<sup>6</sup> Mk. 16:20

<sup>7</sup> See Mt. 22:15-16 in Bl. Theophylact's *Explanation* of St. Matthew, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>8</sup> For more discussion of the Messianic prophecy underlying this belief of the Herodians, see Bl. Theophylact's comment on Mt. 1:17, and footnote, in Vol.I of his *Explanation*, op. cit., p.18.

Wisdom escapes their cunning. "Show Me a coin," He says. Seeing on the coin the image of Caesar, He says, "Render those things which have this image to him whose image it is, that is, to Caesar, and render to God the things that are God's." This means: paying tax to Caesar does not hinder you from giving reverence to God. For you are able both to pay tribute to Caesar and to render to God the things that belong to God. "Caesar" also means, for each one of us, the things needed for the body. The Lord is commanding us, therefore, to give to the body that which belongs to it, such as food and the necessary clothing, and to God the things that are God's, such as vigils and prayer according to our strength. But also, throw to the devil, who is "Caesar", the things that were given to you by him, such as anger and wicked desires, but offer to God the things that are God's.

**18-27.** Then come unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked Him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as concerning the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err. The Sadducees were a sect of the Jews who said that there is neither resurrection from the dead, nor angels, nor any immaterial spirit. These cunning men approach Him craftily, contriving this story with the intent of refuting the resurrection from the dead. Thus they spin a tale that has never occurred, and, most probably, never will. They invent seven individuals who married the same woman, to ridicule the resurrection. Since they themselves argue from the law of Moses, the

Lord shows them that they are ignorant of the Scriptures. You do not understand, He says, of what kind of resurrection Scripture speaks. You think that there will be then the same kind of life in the body as there is now; but it will not be so. Thus you are ignorant of the meaning of Scripture, but you are also ignorant of the power of God. Perhaps you are so busy staring at the complexity of things that you cannot see how a body once separated from its soul can be reunited to it. But by the power of God this is easily accomplished. For there will be a resurrection from the dead, but not to carnality, but to a divine and angelic kind of life. Since we will be incorruptible, and will remain forever the same, there will be no marriage. Now, because we are corruptible, there is marriage, so that, by joining together for the continuance of the human race, we do not become extinct. But then, just as the angels are without the need for marital procreation because they remain the same and never come to an end, so too the resurrected will remain undiminished in number, and there will be no need for marriage. And He reproves the Sadducees in another way, saying that they are ignorant of the Scriptures. For if they knew the Scriptures, they would have understood what was meant by "I am the God of Abraham," that is to say, "I am the God of the living." For He did not say, "I was" their God, as if they had perished, but rather, "I am" their God even now, in the present. But someone might say that the Lord said this only in reference to the soul of Abraham, and not in reference to his body, with the implication that bodies are not resurrected. To which I would answer, first, that "Abraham", the man, consists of both soul and body joined together, so that "the God of Abraham" is the God of Abraham's body too, and his body is itself alive in God's presence, still existing. Furthermore, since the Sadducees doubted the resurrection of the body, the Lord spoke concerning bodies, which are alive and in God's presence, and not just concerning souls which even the fleshly Sadducees confessed. Consider this as well: "resurrection" means the rising of that which has fallen down. The immortal soul does not fall down, but the body does. Therefore the body will rise up again, when it is joined once more to the soul to which it is yoked.

**28-34.** And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel;

The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth, that there is one God; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that dared ask Him any question. Matthew says that the man came tempting the Lord,<sup>9</sup> while Mark says here that he answered wisely. Do they contradict? Not at all, for it is likely that at first he was tempting the Lord with his question, and then he was helped by the Lord's response, and answered wisely, and was praised by the Lord. See also that the Lord's words of praise bore witness to the fact that the man was not yet perfect. For the Lord did not say, "Thou art in the kingdom of God," but, "Thou art not far." But why did this lawyer ask the Lord this question in the first place? He was hoping to catch Christ changing the law, and thus to accuse Him of being opposed to the law. But the Lord shows him that asking such questions as these stems from a lack of love and a consuming spite. Therefore He says that the first and great commandment is to love God, and the second is like it, to love one's neighbor. How are these two commandments alike? In that the two commandments are held together by each other. He who loves God, also loves God's creation; and that part of His creation which is the most akin to God is man. Therefore he who loves God will also love all mankind. And shall not he who loves his neighbor love God all the more? For if he loves men, who so often cause offence and bear hatred, how much more will he love God Who is always his Benefactor? Listen to what the Lord says also: "He who loves Me will keep My commandments."<sup>10</sup> See that it is out of love for God that we keep His commandments, and that the substance of His commandments is that we

<sup>9</sup> Mt. 22:35

<sup>10</sup> See Jn. 14:15.

love one another. And again, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>11</sup> Do you see again that for us to love Christ, and to be His disciples and friends, comes from loving each other? Consider how all the faculties of our life are enumerated here. There is that faculty which is called [by the philosophers] 'animal-like', and this power is suggested by the words "with all thy soul." For the Lord wants us to direct all our fervor and desire to the love of God. There is another power, named 'plant-like', meaning the power to nourish and to cause growth. This too should be given entirely to God. And there is also the rational power, which the law calls 'the mind'. Therefore we should offer up in love all of our faculties to God.

35-40. And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit, The Lord said to My Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet. David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his son? And the great multitude heard Him gladly. And He said unto them in His teaching, Beware of the scribes, who love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the places of honour at the feasts: who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation. Since the Lord was about to go to His Passion, He corrects the false teaching of the scribes, who held that the Christ was to be the son of David, but not the Lord God. By David's own words, Jesus shows that He Himself is God. He does not do so just to teach, but also to cause fear with the words, "Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet." For the scribes were indeed His enemies, whom God the Father made the footstool of the feet of Christ. See how He asked the question. He did not say, "What do you think of Me?" but instead, "What do you think of Christ?" so as not to offend them. You cannot say to me that David said this without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For Jesus says that David called Him Lord "by the Holy Spirit,"<sup>12</sup> indicating that David was moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit. How

<sup>11</sup> Jn. 13:35

<sup>12</sup> Ps. 109:1

then can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David, and not also his Lord and God? The multitude listened to Him with pleasure, and Jesus said to them, "Beware of the scribes who dress pompously so as to be honored, and who welcome salutations and praises in the marketplaces, and are eager to receive all the other tokens of glory. These are the same ones who devour widows' houses." For they would go like thieves among defenseless women, posing as their protectors, and would make a pretense of long prayer, and by feigning piety they would hypocritically deceive naive people, and devour the houses of the rich. Therefore they will receive a greater damnation than the other Jews who sinned. For "mighty men shall be mightily tormented."<sup>13</sup> By these words Jesus is also teaching His disciples not to behave like the scribes, but to imitate Himself. For having ordained them to be teachers, it was fitting that He should also give them direction concerning their way of life.

**41-44.** And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. There was a wonderful custom among the Jews, that all those who had the means, and were willing, would put money into the treasury in the temple, for the support of the priests, the poor, and the widows. While many that were rich were casting in much, a widow approached who showed herself to be wealthier in disposition than in means. Glory to Thee, O Christ, Who often doth accept the small gift more gladly than the great. And may my soul also become a widow, surviving Satan to whom it was wed; and may my soul cast into the temple treasury two small coins, signifying my flesh and my proud mind which have both become small and light: the flesh, through self control, and the proud mind, through humility. Then may I hear the Lord say that I have consecrated all my living and my life to God, leaving nothing in my flesh or mind to belong to the world.

<sup>13</sup> Wisdom of Solomon 6:6

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

*Concerning the end.  
Concerning the day and the hour.*

1-4. And as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? Because the Lord had spoken many things concerning the desolation of Jerusalem, as, for example, when He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,"<sup>1</sup> the disciples point out to Him the great majesty of the temple, wondering if buildings of such size and beauty would ever be destroyed. But He foretells that they will be destroyed, and in such a manner that not one stone will be left upon the other. In an attempt to prove Christ's words false, some say that much of the ancient city of Jerusalem remained standing. But this is not so. And even if some part had remained standing, which none did, at the end of the world not one stone would be left upon the other. History tells us how the Emperor Hadrian had the city and the temple dug up from the foundations,<sup>2</sup> thus fulfilling the prophecy that "there shall not be left one stone upon the other." Then Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives and the disciples approached Him and asked, "When shall these things be?" that is, when shall the end of Jerusalem be accomplished? Before answering their question, Jesus sharpens their understanding so that they will not be deceived. Since the Jews had begun to ail spiritually, certain men had risen up, calling themselves teachers, and therefore the Lord says, "Take heed that you not be deceived."

<sup>1</sup> Mt. 23:38

<sup>2</sup> In his work *Jewish Wars*, Bk. VII, Ch. 1, the historian Josephus refers to the complete destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., when Vespasian was Emperor. But under the Emperor Hadrian, c. 132 A.D., Jerusalem was again besieged by the Romans, and rebellion put down.

**5-10.** And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of the pangs of travail. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them. And the Gospel must first be preached among all nations. "Many shall come," such as Judas and Theudas who said that they had been sent by God.<sup>3</sup> "Ye shall hear of wars," He said, such as those which Josephus relates to have occurred before the Romans seized Jerusalem. And the Jewish nation did rise up, and refused to pay tribute to the Romans. So the Romans were angered and waged war, mounting frequent campaigns against them, but the end of Jerusalem was not yet. For the Romans showed mercy. But there were not only wars, but also plagues sent by God, and famines and earthquakes, God showing them clearly that it was He Himself Who was warring against them. All these things were the beginnings of the pangs of labor, that is, of the evils that were about to befall them. "But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils." He purposefully inserts these words concerning the disciples, that "they shall deliver you up to councils," so that they might take comfort in their own adversities from the disasters that will befall them all. The Lord also gives them not a little comfort by telling them that it is "for My sake" that they shall be brought before rulers and kings, since they will suffer these things for Him. "For a testimony against them" means that these rulers and kings will have no answer to give for their actions and from that very time they will be condemned; it also means that although they twisted you with tortures, they could not overcome the truth. Then, so that the disciples would not think that these dangers and afflictions would prevent them from preaching, the Lord says that "the Gospel must first be preached among all the nations" and then Jerusalem would be

<sup>3</sup> Acts 5:36-37

captured. That the Gospel was indeed preached before the capture of Jerusalem, hear what St. Paul says: "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."<sup>4</sup> And this also took place for the greater condemnation of the Jews, that the Gospel was preached everywhere before the capture of Jerusalem. For when they saw how quickly the preaching spread throughout the world, they ought to have recognized the power of God, and repented, and thus been saved from disaster. But they did not learn, and therefore their condemnation was greater.

**11-13.** But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated by all men for My sake: but he that shall patiently endure until the end, the same shall be saved. Before the final battle was joined, what had the apostles not suffered, standing before tribunals and brought before kings—Herod, Agrippa, and Nero? "Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak" in your own defense, but at that very hour the Holy Spirit shall give you the words to speak. The Lord warns them beforehand of the very worst thing of all: your own family will war against you. He tells them this so that, hearing it beforehand, they will be prepared, and thus more easily endure this calamity. Then He gives them this consolation: "for My sake" you shall be hated. That it is for His sake is sufficient to lighten every hardship. It is also the greatest consolation that salvation awaits him who patiently endures until the end.

**14-17.** But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 10:18. The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans was written some ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! "The abomination of desolation" is the statue of the captor of the city. For every idol is called an "abomination". And it is one "of desolation" because after the Romans had captured Jerusalem, they laid waste to it, leaving it desolate, and set up this statue within the sanctuary of the temple. For even Pilate had caused a great stir among the people when he brought by night into the temple an image of Caesar. And this was the beginning of both the war and the desolation of Jerusalem. Therefore, "then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains." Rightly did He say, "them that be in Judea," for the apostles were not in Judea, but had been driven out from Jerusalem before the war, as we have already said. Rather, they went forth from Jerusalem, moved by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let those who remain in Judea flee. And let him that is on the housetop not return for anything that is in the house. Happy is that man who saves himself, though he is naked; but woe to those who have children and are with child. Why? Because those with children will be held back by their compassion for their children, and will not be able to flee, while those who are with child, because of the burden of the pregnancy, will not be able to take flight easily. But I think that this also means that the eating of children will take place. For in the famine that ensued, some of those besieged in the city cooked and ate their own children.<sup>5</sup>

**18-20.** And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days. If flight should be necessary in winter, those wishing to flee will be prevented by the difficulties of the season. And there will be more severe affliction than has ever before, or will ever again, occur. And if God had not cut short the war with the Romans, "no flesh should be saved," that is, not a single Jew would have survived. "But for the

<sup>5</sup> See Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, Bk. VI, Ch. III, 4.

elect's sake," that is, for the sake of those Jews who believed, or who would later believe, the war was cut short. For God knew that many of the Jews would come to believe in Christ after the capture of Jerusalem, and therefore He did not allow the whole Jewish race to be destroyed. These events may also be understood in a moral sense. The abomination of desolation, standing in a holy place, is every satanic thought within our minds. "Then let him that is in Judea flee to the mountains" means: let him who confesses run up into the mountains of the virtues. For "Judea" means "confession". And let him who stands in a high place not come down. For when some passionate thought takes its place within us, we must, by means of confessing our sin and confessing God, run up into the high places and not come down from that height of virtue. And let him who is working to do good not return to take his old way of thought, that is, the garment, which he has put off. And woe to those who flee in winter, for we ought rather to flee from sin with warmth and fervor, and not coldly and sluggishly. For this is what is suggested by flight in winter.

**21-26.** And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: for false christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. The Lord has finished speaking about Jerusalem. Now He begins to speak of the coming of the Antichrist. The word "then" does not refer to the time immediately following the fulfillment of the things mentioned above concerning Jerusalem: "And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; believe him not." Understand that this is an expression used in Scripture. For example, Matthew says, after the birth of Christ, "In those days came John the Baptist."<sup>6</sup> In which days? Was it in the days immediately following the birth of Christ? No, but only some time later. So it is here, that when the Lord

<sup>6</sup> Mt. 3:1

says, "then," He does not mean immediately after Jerusalem had been laid waste, but instead, at the time of the coming of the Antichrist, do not be deceived. For many will call themselves Christ, so as to deceive even the elect. After the coming of the Antichrist, all creation will be changed, the lights of heaven being darkened on account of the exceedingly great light of Christ. The angelic powers will be shaken, that is, will be astonished, to see such a great change taking place, and their fellow servants being judged. And then they shall see the Lord as the Son of Man, that is, in His Body. For what is seen must certainly have a body. But though He comes in the Body as a Man, yet He comes with great power and glory.

**27-31.** And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away. Do you see that the Son commands the angels, just as the Father does? How then can some say that the Son is not equal to God the Father? The angels therefore will come to gather together the elect so that they can be snatched up into the clouds to meet the Lord. Learn from the fig tree what it is that I am saying. Just as when the fig tree puts out leaves, immediately it is summer, so too the oppression of the Antichrist will be followed immediately by the second coming of Christ, with nothing else intervening. For the righteous, Christ's coming will indeed be like summer after winter; but for sinners it will be like winter after summer. "Verily I say unto you, that this generation, by which I mean this generation of believing Christians, shall not pass away till all these things, concerning both Jerusalem and the coming of the Antichrist, take place." He clearly does not mean the generation of the apostles, for the apostles did not live to the end of the world; most of them did not live even until the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore He means the

generation of Christians,<sup>7</sup> thus consoling the apostles. So that they would not think that perhaps faith in Christ would disappear altogether because of the great evils that would occur, He says, "Take courage, the generation of the faithful shall not pass away or vanish. The immovable elements of the creation, heaven and earth, shall pass away but My words shall not prove false. For all that I have spoken shall be done."

**32-37.** But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at evening, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. The Lord wants to prevent the disciples from asking about that day and hour, and this is why He says that neither the angels, nor the Son, know. For if He had said, "I know the day and the hour but I do not wish to reveal it to you," He would have grieved them. But now He acts in a wise manner, and keeps them from seeking to find out, and from bothering Him with these questions, by saying to them, "Neither the angels, nor I Myself, know the day and the hour." From an example you shall understand what is meant. Often a little child will see his father holding something in his hands, and will ask for it. But the father does not want to give it, causing the child to burst into tears and to carry on because he did not get what he wanted. Finally the father hides what he is holding, and shows his empty hands to the child, thus putting an end to the tears. So too the Lord hid the day and the hour from the apostles, treating them like children. For if He had said, "I know, but I will not say," they would have been vexed that they could not find it out from Him. It is

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<sup>7</sup> The Greek word *genea*, as does its English equivalent 'generation', in its primary sense refers to the coming into being, or the birth, of a person or people. Secondly, by extension *genea* means all those who share this same origin, namely, a family, tribe, or race of people. Thirdly, it can mean those who have in common the same span of years from birth to maturity. It is the second meaning that is intended here: "this generation" is the whole Christian race, past, present, and future, whose common origin is baptism by water and the Spirit.

obvious that the Lord does know the day and the hour. For He Himself created all the ages of time; how could He not know what He had made? But it is also to our advantage that God did not reveal either the universal, or the individual, end of life, so that, not knowing the time of the end, we might always be striving in labor, vigilantly expecting the end, and ever fearful lest it come upon us when we are unprepared.<sup>8</sup> Let us also consider the meaning of the words: "at evening" the end approaches, when a man grows old and dies. "At midnight" a man is middle aged. "At cockcrowing" one's mind has matured; for the rooster signifies our ability to reason, which awakens us from the sleep of incomprehension. Once awakened, a youth begins to live according to reason, and to understand. "In the morning" is the time of childhood. So then, it is necessary that all take heed beforehand of the end. One must even be concerned for a young child, lest it die unbaptized. The Lord commands these things to all, both those in the world and those who have withdrawn to the desert. We need two things, the Lord says: to be wakeful and to pray. For there are many who stay awake but spend their nights in evil deeds. See that He did not say, "For I know not when the time is," but, "ye know not." It is for our own benefit that He hid this knowledge. For if even now when our end is uncertain we become enraged with each other, what would we not do if we knew the time of our end? We would spend our time before the end doing the utmost wickedness, and only on the last day would show our repentance: this would be the greatest harm we could do to ourselves.

<sup>8</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "Then He gives an example concerning Himself and the faithful, and says, 'It is like a man taking a far journey,' showing Himself as a man, as has been said many times. The far journey signifies His Ascension into heaven, his house, the present world, and his servants, the Christians. Each man's work is to keep the Lord's commandments and to labor in the virtues. The doorkeeper is each one's mind which oversees the doors to the soul, which are the senses. For it is through these doors, the senses, that the spiritual thief so often attacks."

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

*Concerning the woman who anointed the Lord with myrrh.*

*Concerning the Pascha.*

*Concerning the betrayal of Christ.*

*Concerning Peter's denial.*

*Concerning the charges laid against the Lord by the high priest.*

1-5. After two days it was the feast of the Pascha, and of the unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death. But they said, Not on the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people. And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at table, there came a woman having an alabaster box of myrrh of pure spikenard, very precious; and she broke the box, and poured it out on His head. And there were some that had indignation among themselves, and said, Why was there this waste of the myrrh? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred penee, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. This council of the chief priests and scribes met on Wednesday, and this is why we fast on Wednesdays.<sup>1</sup> They wanted to postpone their plans until after the time of the feast, but they were not allowed to do so. For the Lord Himself determined the time of His Passion, and it was well pleasing to Him to be crucified on the Pascha, as He was the true Paschal Lamb. Therefore let us marvel at His power: when they wished to seize Him, they could not; but when they did not wish to seize Him, because of the feast, then He gave Himself over to them of His own will. A woman came to Him while He was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper. All four evangelists mention this anointing with myrrh.<sup>2</sup> While some think that the four evangelists refer to the same woman, it is not so, for there were two: the woman mentioned by John, who was the sister of Lazarus, and another woman who is mentioned by the other three evangelists. But if you take

<sup>1</sup> From the apostolic era to the present, Christians fast on Wednesday and Friday of every week, except for certain fast-free weeks in the year.

<sup>2</sup> Mt. 26:6-13, Lk. 7:36-38, Jn. 12:1-8.

heed, you will find that these are in fact three different women: the one in John, the one in Luke, and the one in Matthew and Mark. For the woman mentioned in Luke was a harlot, and her account occurs in the middle of the Gospel. But the account of the woman mentioned in Matthew occurs at the time of the Lord's Passion, and it is not said that she was a harlot. The Lord approves the woman's intention and purpose in spending so much for the pure spikenard. "Pure" spikenard means either the type of spikenard, or it means "unadulterated, prepared faithfully."<sup>3</sup> There were some who were indignant with the woman. John says that it was Judas who was indignant. It is likely that the other disciples also criticized the woman, because they had heard Christ teaching so much about almsgiving; but Judas was indignant for a different reason, namely, his greed and profiteering. This is why John mentions only Judas, because Judas criticized the woman for deceitful reasons. "They murmured against her," that is, they were indignant, and reviled her, and scolded her.

**6-9.** And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whosoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint My Body for burial. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. The Lord reprimands the apostles for inappropriately hindering the woman from accomplishing her desire. "Why trouble ye her?" He asks. She has offered a gift: why do you turn her away with a rebuke? At the same time He chastises the betrayer, saying to him, "She has done this for My burial," reproving him for his lack of conscience. It is as if the Lord were saying to him, "You will hand Me over to My death, and you do not reproach yourself. But she, inspired by God, has brought myrrh for My burial. Does she deserve your reproach?" Here the Lord makes two prophecies. First, that the Gospel will be preached throughout the whole world, and, secondly, that the deed of this woman will be preached

<sup>3</sup> The Greek term for "pure spikenard" is *pistike nardon*. Bl. Theophylact here is commenting on the relationship between the adjective *pistike*, meaning "pure, unadulterated", and the noun *pistis*, meaning "faith".

together with the Gospel. From this text, let those be confounded who put the poor above Christ. For I have heard goldsmiths say, "If I make a living melting down a holy vessel in order to give to the poor, it is no crime." But let them hear that Christ prefers service to Himself above service to the poor. The Body of Christ is, literally, that which is on the gold paten, and His Blood is that which is in the chalice. Therefore that man who takes away the costly paten, and compels the Body of Christ to be placed upon a cheaper one, using the pretext of serving the poor, let it be known that he will share the fate of Judas.

**10-11.** And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. When the woman had thus honored Him, then the disciple, "one of the twelve," was filled with madness. The evangelist adds the words "one of the twelve" with good reason, to show that Judas himself was one of the elect, the chosen few. What does this mean, "how he might betray Him"? It means, how he might inform them when Jesus was alone. For the chief priests were afraid to fall upon Him while He was teaching, because of the multitude. Judas promised, therefore, to hand Him over to them when Jesus was alone.<sup>4</sup>

**12-15.** And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Pascha, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the Pascha? And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the master of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Pascha with My disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. "The first day of unleavened bread" means Thursday, the day before the feast of unleavened bread. For the unleavened bread was eaten on Friday. His disciples approach Him to ask where they will eat the Pascha. From this it is clear

<sup>4</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "They were glad," not only because they could arrest Jesus without a great disturbance when Judas betrayed Him at the right moment, but also because Jesus, they thought, had begun to be hated by His own disciples.

that Christ did not have His own place of lodging, nor did the disciples. For if they did, they would have taken Him there. He sends forth two of His disciples, Peter and John, as Luke says,<sup>5</sup> to a man who was a stranger, thus showing them that it was in His power not to suffer. For if He convinced the mind of this stranger to welcome Him, could He not have done the same to the others? He also gives them a sign to find the house, to follow a man carrying a pitcher of water. This may also be understood in a spiritual sense. The man carrying the pitcher of water signifies one who has been baptized. With baptism he goes into a house, that is, into a dwelling place fit for rational beings. For he who has baptism finds restful shelter, living according to reason and thereby resting as in a house. The master of the house is the mind, and it shows that it has available a large upper room, that is, a capacity for the highest thoughts. And this upper room is also ‘‘furnished’’. That is, although it is high up among the peaks, it is not jagged with pride, but made level and put in order by humility.<sup>6</sup> It is there, in such a mind as this, that the Pascha is prepared for Christ by two disciples, Peter and John, who signify action and divine vision respectively. Peter, who was fervent, signifies action, and John, the Theologian, signifies vision of the divine.

**16-21.** And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Pascha. And in the evening He cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? And another said, Is it I? And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born. How is it that they ‘‘sat’’, when the law commanded them to stand to eat the Pascha?<sup>7</sup> It is likely, therefore, that first they kept the Pascha of the law, and then

<sup>5</sup> Lk. 22:8

<sup>6</sup> The Greek word *estrōmenon*, translated in the KJV as ‘‘furnished’’, can also mean ‘‘made smooth, level, or calm’’.

<sup>7</sup> Ex. 12:11

they sat when the Lord was about to give them His own Pascha. The disciples began to be grieved at the words of the Lord, ‘‘One of you shall betray Me.’’ For although the eleven were innocent of this betrayal, still they anguished, because they trusted more in God, Who knows the hearts of men, than they trusted in themselves. Notice also the words, ‘‘The Son of Man goeth.’’ For the ‘‘death’’ of Christ was a going away to a far country, not a death. ‘‘Good were it for that man if he had never been born.’’ These words were spoken in reference to the punishment which awaited the betrayer. It would have been better not to have been born, than to have been born for punishment. Viewed from the perspective of the result of his actions, it is seen that it would have been better for Judas never to have existed. For although God created Judas to do good deeds, he on his own fell away into this great wickedness. It would have been better for him had he not been born at all.

**22-25.** And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My Body. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. Some say that Judas did not partake of the Mysteries,<sup>8</sup> but left before the Lord gave them the Mysteries. Others say that the Lord gave the Holy Things even to this ungrateful man. First Jesus ‘‘blessed’’, meaning, He gave thanks, and then He broke the bread, just as we do ourselves when we say the Eucharistic prayers. ‘‘This is My Body,’’ this, which you are receiving now. For the bread is not a symbol of the Lord’s Body; instead, the bread is changed into the very Body of the Lord Himself. For the Lord also said, ‘‘The Bread that I will give you is My flesh.’’<sup>9</sup> He did not say, ‘‘is a symbol of My flesh,’’ but ‘‘is My flesh.’’ And again He said, ‘‘Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man.’’<sup>10</sup> Why then, one might ask, does it not appear to be flesh? Because of our frailty, O man! For we are

<sup>8</sup> *Mystērion*, ‘‘Mystery,’’ is the Orthodox word for ‘‘Sacrament’’.

<sup>9</sup> Jn. 6:51

<sup>10</sup> Jn. 6:53

accustomed to see bread and wine; but if we saw before us blood and flesh, we could not endure it and would be repulsed. Therefore the Lover of Mankind condescends<sup>11</sup> to our weakness, and keeps the outward form of bread and wine, but changes them into true flesh and blood. The Lord said "Blood of the New Testament" to make a distinction between it and the blood of the Old Testament. For in the Old Testament there was also blood, which was sprinkled upon the people and the book of the law.<sup>12</sup> "I will drink no more wine," He says, "until the Resurrection." He calls His Resurrection "the kingdom", because when He rose from the dead He showed Himself to be King and Ruler over death. After His Resurrection He ate and drank with His disciples, confirming that it was He Himself, the One Who had suffered. He "drinks it new," that is, in some new and strange manner, for He no longer had a body subject to want and in need of food and drink, but instead an incorruptible and immortal body. Understand this as well: the vine is the Lord Himself; the fruits of that vine are the Mysteries, and that hidden knowledge which comes from the Lord as He teaches knowledge to men. In the kingdom of God, that is, in the eighth age, the Lord, together with His disciples, drinks the Mysteries and Wisdom, teaching us new things and revealing things which are now hidden.

26-31. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall stumble and fall because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall stumble and fall, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, Even if I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all. They gave thanks both before and after drinking, teaching us that we too should give thanks and sing a hymn both before and after eating. At the same time, by singing a hymn

<sup>11</sup> *Synkatabainōn*. For an explanation of this important word, see Volume I of the *Explanation*, op. cit., p.79, footnote 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ex. 24:5-8. Mention is made here only that the people were sprinkled with blood which is called "the blood of the covenant".

to God as He went out to meet His betrayer, He showed that He welcomed His death which was for our sake. And indeed He also teaches us not to be faint-hearted when we are beset by many afflictions that are for our salvation. Rather, we should give thanks to God Who, through our affliction, is bringing salvation to many. He goes out to the Mount of Olives to be alone when they came to seize Him, so that they would not cause such a great disturbance. For if they had come upon Him while He was in the city, perhaps the multitude would have been stirred up because of Him, and then His enemies could use this opportunity to appear justified in arresting Him as a fomenter of rebellion. The Lord prophesies to the disciples that they will stumble and fall; but then, lest they think that He said this as an open accusation against them all, He brings forward the testimony of the prophet Zechariah, that they "shall be scattered."<sup>13</sup> But at the end He also consoles them by saying, "I will go before you into Galilee." But Peter contradicts Him, and so hears the words, "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." And it happened thus: Peter denied Him once, and the cock crowed; he denied Him two more times and the cock crowed again. So the Lord says here, "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." Likewise all the disciples made the same promise, boasting a fervor that proved cold. By contradicting the Lord's prophecy, they treated Him Who is Truth as a liar, and so He permitted them to fall, and to see human nature for what it was. Indeed the Lord could have preserved Peter and the rest of them from falling. But He allowed it, to teach us not to trust in ourselves. It is the Father Who says, "I will smite the shepherd." Since the Father permitted the Son to be smitten, the Father is said to smite the One Who is smitten by His permission. Jesus calls the apostles sheep on account of their guilelessness.

32-42. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy. And He saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it

<sup>13</sup> Zech. 13:7

were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, **Abba**, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither knew they what to answer Him. And He goeth the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand. It was the practice of Jesus always to pray alone, by His example teaching us to seek out quiet for our prayers. He took with Him only those three disciples who had also been witnesses of His glory on Mt. Tabor, so that having seen those glorious things they might also see these sad things and understand that the Lord was also truly man, and that, like us, He felt sorrow and distress. Since He had assumed full humanness in all aspects, of course He would feel sorrow and distress in His human nature. All we humans by nature find death odious and distasteful. By saying, "Take this cup from Me," He showed His humanness; by saying, "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt," He teaches us to ignore our nature which so urgently presses its demands upon us, and instead to ask for what is pleasing to God. When He returned after His prayer, He found all three sleeping, but rebuked Peter only, as if saying to him, "Was it not you who promised to die with Me? You were not able to keep watch for one hour, and you think you will scorn death? But watch and pray, all of you,<sup>14</sup> lest you enter into the temptation to deny Me. For your spirit is willing and eager not to deny Me, and this is why you made your promise to Me. But your flesh is weak; so much so that unless through prayer God gives strength to your flesh, you are in great danger of denying Me." And again the Lord went away to pray, saying the same words, so as to confirm, by praying a second time, that He was not only divine, but also really and truly a man.

<sup>14</sup> Here, in the Greek text of St. Mark, the imperative verbs "watch and pray" are in the second person plural, indicating that the Lord is now addressing the other disciples as well.

He also prayed again to teach us to pray repeatedly, and not to say something just once in prayer and then to stop. But when He found them again sleeping, He did not rebuke them severely, for they were weighed down by sleep. Learn from this the frailty and weakness of our human nature: though we know we are unable to do such a small thing as to withstand sleep, yet we often promise to do great things that are utterly beyond our strength. He prays again, for the third time, for the same reasons that I mentioned above. He comes back again and speaks to the disciples, without scolding, though He ought to have scolded them for not correcting themselves after His first rebuke, but allowing themselves to fall asleep. What does He say? "Sleep on now, and take your rest." He says this with irony. Since He knew that the betrayer was coming, He said to them, "Now is the time to sleep; sleep on. Behold, the betrayer is coming." He said this to criticize their sleeping. That He spoke with irony is clear when He then says, "Rise up, let us go." He does not say this so that they could flee, but on the contrary, so that they could meet their enemies. Some have understood the Lord's words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death," to mean, "I am sorrowful, not because I am about to die, but because it is the Israelites, My kinsmen, who are themselves about to crucify Me, and for this reason to be cast out from the kingdom of God."

43-49. And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed Him had given them a signal, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, Master; and kissed Him. And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but the Scriptures must be fulfilled. The words, "one of the twelve," are not added without a reason, but as an accusation against the betrayer, that it was one of the first company of disciples who in madness turned against the Master. See how senselessly he acts, thinking to fool the Lord with a kiss, as if the Lord would then

imagine that Judas was a friend. Even if Judas had perhaps been a friend, why did he come with enemies? Indeed evil is foolishness. "One of them that stood by" refers to Peter, whom Mark does not mention by name lest he appear to praise his own teacher, Peter, as one who was zealous for Christ. It was fitting that he cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, thus suggesting that they were deaf men, heedless, disobedient, and neglectful of the Scriptures. For if they had ears to hear, and had given heed to the Scriptures, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Peter did not strike the servant of any other than that of the high priest. For the high priests, those servants of spite and self-love, were foremost among those who shut their ears to the Scriptures. The Lord said to the multitude, "Are ye come out as against a thief? I was daily in the temple teaching." This reveals His divinity. While He was teaching in the temple, they were not able to seize Him although He was in their very hands; for it was not yet the time for His Passion. But when He so desired, then He gave Himself up to them, so that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter,"<sup>15</sup> neither striving, nor crying,<sup>16</sup> but of His own will following.

**50-54.** And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled away from them naked. And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with Him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. The disciples fled. For neither Truth Itself, nor the prophets, could lie. "There followed Him a certain young man." This young man was perhaps a member of that house where they had eaten the Pascha. Some say that this was James, the Brother of God,<sup>17</sup> who was also called "the Righteous". He always dressed in a single garment his whole life, and he was made bishop of Jerusalem by the apostles after the

<sup>15</sup> Is. 53:7

<sup>16</sup> See Is. 42:2.

<sup>17</sup> This title of honor was given to James, a son of Joseph and hence the step-brother of the Lord, who became the first bishop of Jerusalem, and one of the first martyrs.

Ascension of the Lord. This young man, then, left the linen cloth, and fled. If the chief disciples fled, it is not strange that this young man fled as well. But Peter followed, showing more fervent love for the Master. Although the law commanded that there be one high priest for life, at that time there were many, because the Romans each year sold the office for a sum of money. "The chief priests" are all those who had already finished their terms appointed by the civil authorities and had left the high priesthood.

**55-61.** And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee? But He was silent, and answered nothing. These men, who themselves stand condemned, form a court of law in appearance only, pretending to first pass judgment on Him before taking His life. How can this be a just court, when such witnesses as these are produced, who say nothing of any weight, and whose testimonies are all confused and contradictory? And even those who appear to say something of substance speak lies. For the Lord did not say, "I will destroy this temple," but "Destroy this temple;" neither did He say, "made with hands," but simply "this temple."<sup>18</sup> The high priest stood up and questioned Jesus, wanting to draw Him into making a defense, so that they might incriminate Him by His own words. But He is silent, knowing that they will pay no attention to His words; which is what Luke also says, that when the Lord was questioned, He answered, "If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also ask you ye will not answer Me."<sup>19</sup>

**61-65.** Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art

<sup>18</sup> Jn. 2:19

<sup>19</sup> Lk. 22:67-68

Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him. Prophesy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands. The high priest asks another question, not in order to learn the answer and to believe, but so as to grasp some excuse to condemn Him. To the question, "Art Thou the Christ," the high priest adds, "the Son of the Blessed?" For there were many christians, that is, anointed ones, such as the kings and the high priests, but none of these was the Son of God Who is ever blessed and praised. Jesus said, "I am." He knew they would not believe; yet He had to answer as He did so that they would have no grounds on which to say later, "If He had spoken clearly, we would have listened and believed." Therefore it is to their greater condemnation that they heard Him speak now, and yet they did not believe. "Ye shall see Me," He says, "as the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power of the Father." For "power" here means the Father. At the second coming He will come in His Body, so as to be seen and recognized by those who crucified Him. The high priest here keeps a Judaic custom; for when the Jews saw something terrible and evil, they would tear their clothing. So here, the high priest rent his clothes, as if the Lord had blasphemed and a great evil had taken place. To this one might fittingly apply the words of David, "They were rent asunder, yet repented not."<sup>20</sup> Unwittingly, the action of the high priest was also a sign that the high priesthood of the Jews was now rent asunder and abolished. Since Jesus had been condemned by the vote of all the chief priests, their servants covered His face, and struck Him, saying, "Prophesy: who is it that struck You?" Hearing all this, what can we ourselves suffer to repay the Master for what He suffered for us? These things are full of awe and dread.

66-72. And as Peter was beneath in the courtyard, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming

<sup>20</sup> Ps. 34:19

himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And the maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept. Although he was fervent, Peter became weak and shaken by cowardice, and so he denied the Lord. Yet it was only a servant girl who struck such terror in him. God permitted Peter to suffer all this, according to divine providence, so that he would not become puffed up and proud, and so that, having himself learned how uncontrollable is human weakness, he would be compassionate to those who have sinned. It is not important whether it was the same servant girl who rebuked Peter, or two different ones. Matthew says that there were two,<sup>21</sup> Mark says there was but one. This is no obstacle to our belief in the truth of the Gospel. Do they disagree in the weighty and substantial matters of our salvation? Does one evangelist say that the Lord was crucified, and the other, that He was not? Far from it! Therefore Peter was shaken by cowardice, and he forgot what the Lord had said, "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father."<sup>22</sup> But his repentance and tears made Peter once again a friend of Christ. The [Greek] word *epiballōn* may mean "covering his head," or "beginning [to weep] with great intensity."<sup>23</sup> What Matthew said unclearly, "Before the cock

<sup>21</sup> Mt. 26:69-71

<sup>22</sup> Mt. 10:33

<sup>23</sup> It has been difficult for patristic and contemporary commentators alike to interpret the single Greek word *epiballōn*, translated in the KJV as "when he thought thereon." The word is derived from the verb, *ballō*, meaning 'to throw' or 'to cast', and the prefix *epi*, meaning 'to' or 'upon'; hence 'to cast upon'. Various interpretations have been offered as to what it was that Peter "cast upon." Bl. Theophylact's first suggestion is that he "covered his head," i.e. he cast [his cloak] upon [his head]. His second suggestion is that he "began with great intensity" to weep, i.e. he cast [himself] into his weeping. The suggestion in KJV, "when he thought thereon," is that he cast [his attention] upon [Jesus words].

crows, thou shalt deny Me thrice," Mark explains by saying, "Before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." For a rooster will often begin by crowing several times, and then sleep, as it were, and a short time later begin to crow again a second time. Therefore what Matthew said was this: "Before the cock crows," that is, before the cock completes its round of morning crowing, "thou shalt deny Me thrice." Let the Novatians be put to shame, who refuse to accept back those who have sinned after their baptism and after partaking of the Mysteries.<sup>24</sup> Behold Peter, who partook of the spotless Body and Blood and then denied the Lord, and was accepted back by his repentance. For this very reason the failings of the saints have been recorded, so that we too, if we have sinned because of our neglectfulness, might follow their example and hasten to be restored through repentance.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

*Concerning the things which He suffered under Pilate.*

*Concerning the custom of the Jews.*

*Concerning the request for the Lord's Body.*

*Concerning the tomb.*

1-15. And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused Him of many things: but He answerest nothing. And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against Thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound wth them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him Whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify Him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him. And so Pilate, wanting to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. The Jews delivered the Lord over to the Romans; but they themselves were to be delivered by the Lord into the hands of the Romans. And the Scriptures were fulfilled which say, "Woe to the transgressor! Evils shall befall him according the works of his hands;"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Novatian and his followers were excommunicated by a local council of bishops in Italy in 251 A.D. This decision was confirmed by later councils.

<sup>1</sup> Is. 3:11

and again, "Give unto them according to the works of their hands;"<sup>2</sup> and again, "In the manner in which thou hast done, thus shall your reward be." When Pilate asks, "Art Thou the king of the Jews?" the Lord gives a double answer. For "Thou sayest it" can be understood two ways: it can mean, "You have spoken the truth; you have said what I am." And it can mean, "I have not said this; you say it." But when Jesus was questioned again, He made no answer, causing Pilate to marvel. He marvelled because Jesus endured the accusations steadfastly, saying nothing, even though He was eloquent and learned in the law and quite capable of giving an answer which would silence His slanderers. Contrast the moderation of Pilate to the bloodthirstiness of the Jews, but even Pilate deserves condemnation for not choosing to stand fast and do what was right. They were crying out, "Crucify Him!" and Pilate, though a coward, still tried to save Jesus from condemnation. This is why he asked again, "What then shall I do unto Jesus?" Pilate wanted to give them every possible opportunity to release the innocent Jesus, and this is why he hesitated and delayed. At last Pilate gave in to the will of those men, and he scourged the Lord, that is, he had Him whipped with braided straps, so that it might appear that he was handing over a man who had been condemned by a lawful tribunal. "And Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified." For he wanted to do what satisfied and pleased the crowd, and not what was right and pleasing to God.

**16-21.** And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole cohort. And they clothed Him with purple, and plaited a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross. Soldiers as a group revel in

<sup>2</sup> This, and the following citation from Scripture, have not been identified in the Septuagint, perhaps because of differences in the text, or perhaps because St. Theophylact, in quoting from memory, inadvertently changed a few words. Two references can be given, however, which are very similar. See Jer. 27:29 and Jer. 25:14 (the latter in the KJV only).

commotions, tumults, and insults, and these soldiers here displayed behavior that was only natural to them. For if the Jews, who had received innumerable teachings and blessings, were so disposed towards Jesus, what can we say in accusation of these Gentile soldiers? "They call together the whole cohort," meaning, the whole battalion of soldiers stationed there, "and clothed Him with purple," mocking Him as a king. And these servants of the devil give Him the crown of thorns instead of a diadem, and a reed instead of a scepter. "And they compel one to bear His cross," although another evangelist says that Jesus "went forth bearing His cross."<sup>3</sup> Both of these things happened. For Jesus Himself carried the cross part of the way, and then, when they found someone to carry it for Him, they pressed that man into service, and he carried the cross the rest of the way. Why does the evangelist mention that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus? As a greater confirmation of the truth of this account. For it is very likely that Simon was still living when St. Mark wrote his Gospel, and could relate everything that happened concerning the cross. Let us also wear the purple, by which I mean the royal garment. For we ought to go about like kings, treading under foot serpents and scorpions, and ruling over sin. For we are called "Christians", that is, we too are "the anointed", just as the kings were also known as "christs", that is "the anointed". Therefore our lives should not be servile and ignoble, but instead, free and kingly. And let us also wear the crown of thorns, that is, let us strive to be crowned with a strict life of self-control and abstinence, and not of luxury, gratification, and pleasures. And let us also become "Simon", whose very name means 'obedience', and let us take up the cross of Jesus, mortifying our carnal passions.

**22-28.** And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not. And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with Him they crucify two

<sup>3</sup> Jn. 19:17

thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors. There is a tradition that has come down to us from the holy fathers that Adam was buried in that place. By being crucified there, the Lord heals both the sin and the death of Adam; and on the place where death began, there is death destroyed. "They gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh." Myrrh is most bitter to the taste; therefore, by giving this to the Lord, they mocked Him. Another evangelist says that vinegar with gall was offered to the Lord,<sup>4</sup> and yet another evangelist says vinegar upon hyssop.<sup>5</sup> There is nothing contradictory in this, for there was disorder and commotion, and some offered Him one thing, and others something else, so that vinegar and gall, and wine mixed with myrrh, were all offered. Or perhaps the wine was vinegary, and the myrrh was bitter, so that the evangelist who speaks of wine mingled with myrrh is in agreement with the evangelist who speaks of vinegar and gall. For the wine may be the same thing as "vinegar" if it is vinegary, and the myrrh may be the same as "gall" because of its bitterness. Neither is there a contradiction between Mark and Matthew, when the one says, "And they gave Him to drink, but He received it not," and the other says, "and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink."<sup>6</sup> Certainly by saying, "He received it not," Mark shows that Jesus did not drink of it. They cast lots for His garments, and this too they did in mockery, as if they were dividing, not His poor garments, but the garments of a king. They wrote His title, that is, the accusation against Him for which He was crucified, THE KING OF THE JEWS, so that by this means as well they could dishonor His fame and reputation, making it appear that He was a fomenter of insurrection and had called Himself "king", so that those who passed by would not pity Him, but would instead revile Him as a failed usurper. How is it that Mark says that He was crucified at the third hour, but Matthew says that there was darkness at the sixth hour?<sup>7</sup> It can be explained thus: He was crucified at the third hour and the darkness began at the sixth hour and lasted until the ninth hour. They

<sup>4</sup> Mt. 27:34<sup>5</sup> Jn. 19:29<sup>6</sup> Mt. 27:34<sup>7</sup> Mt. 27:45

crucified the Lord between two thieves, so that the people would think badly of Him, as if He too were an evildoer like those thieves. But this took place by God's providence, for the prophecy was thus fulfilled, "And He was numbered with the transgressors."<sup>8</sup> Also, the two thieves are a symbol of the two peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles. Both were transgressors; the Gentiles transgressed the natural law, while the Jews transgressed both the natural law and the written law given to them by God. The grateful thief represents the Gentiles, but the thief who blasphemed until his end represents the Jews. The Lord is crucified between two thieves, for He is the cornerstone joining us, Jews and Gentiles, together.

29-32. And they that passed by railed at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. Even "they that passed by" on the road blasphemed the Lord, mocking Him as a deceiver. Likewise the chief priests said, "Cannot He Who saved others, save Himself?" thus scoffing at His miracles as if they had all been mere phantasy. For the Lord did save many by working miracles. It is the devil who incited them to say, "Come down from the cross." For the prince and very source of evil knew that salvation would come through the cross, and he was again tempting and testing the Lord, so that if He did come down from the cross, the devil could be assured that Jesus was not the Son of God, and that there would be no salvation through the cross. But Jesus was truly the Son of God, and for this very reason He did not come down. For He would not have ascended the cross in the first place if He had intended to descend from it. But knowing that it was in this manner that salvation would come to mankind, He endured to be crucified and to suffer all the other things which He suffered, and to complete His work. And the two "that were crucified with Him reviled

<sup>8</sup> Is. 53:12

Him" at first, and then, as Luke says,<sup>9</sup> one of them recognized that Jesus was innocent, and began to rebuke the other for blaspheming.<sup>10</sup>

33-37. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elijah. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and breathed His last. There was darkness, not in one place only, but over the whole earth. If it were possible for an eclipse to have occurred at that time, one could say that the event was natural. But it was the fourteenth day of the lunar cycle, a full moon, when a natural eclipse is impossible. The Lord cries out in the Hebrew language the words of the prophet,<sup>11</sup> showing until His last breath that He honors the Hebrew things. In His human nature He spoke the words, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" as if He were saying, "O God, why hast Thou forsaken me, a man, so that I am in need of God to be crucified for me?" For it is we, mankind, who had been forsaken, but Christ was never forsaken by the Father. Listen to what He says: "I am not alone, but the Father is with Me."<sup>12</sup> Or, by another interpretation, He spoke these words on behalf of the Hebrew people, He Himself being a Hebrew in flesh. "Why hast Thou forsaken me, the Hebrew people, so that they crucify Thy Son?" Just as we are accustomed to say, "God hath put on me," meaning, God has put on my human nature, so here, understand "why hast Thou forsaken Me?" to mean either, "why hast Thou forsaken My human nature?" or, "why hast Thou forsaken My people, the Jews?" "And one ran" and gave Him vinegar to drink, so that the sharpness of the vinegar would kill Him more quickly. Before breathing His last, Jesus cried out with a great voice as if He were summoning death, as its

Master, and dying by His own authority. Luke has told us the words He spoke when He cried out: "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit."<sup>13</sup> For this is yet another thing which the Lord has achieved for us, that at death the spirits of the saints ascend into the hands of God. Formerly, all souls were held in hades, until He came Who proclaimed liberty to the captives.<sup>14</sup>

38-41. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and breathed His last, he said, Truly this Man was the Son of God. There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome; (who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem. The veil was rent as a sign from God that the grace of the Holy Spirit had departed from the temple, and so that all could see and enter into the Holy of Holies, which indeed occurred when the Roman army entered the temple. The veil was also rent as a sign that even the temple mourned the crucifixion of the Lord. Just as the Jews have the custom of tearing their garments during such calamities, so too the temple itself, as if it were a living being, showed its grief for the Creator Who suffered, and tore its own garment. The rent veil shows something else as well. Man's flesh is the veil, or covering, of the temple, which is his mind. And so the power which the flesh had over the spirit was rent by the sufferings of Christ, from the top to the bottom, that is, from Adam until the last man. Even Adam was sanctified by the sufferings of Christ, and his flesh will no longer be cursed, nor subject to corruption, and likewise incorruption has been bestowed upon us all. When the centurion, that is, the captain of a hundred (for *centum* in Latin means 'hundred'), saw how Jesus as Master of life gave up His life, he marvelled and confessed Him. See how the order of things are reversed: the Jews put Him to death, but the Gentile confesses Him, and the disciples flee, while the women remain by His side. "There were also women," the evangelist says, "among whom was

<sup>9</sup> Lk. 23:39-43

<sup>10</sup> By the tradition of the Church, this repentant thief is named Dismas.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 21:1

<sup>12</sup> See Jn. 8:16.

<sup>13</sup> Lk. 23:46

<sup>14</sup> Is. 61:1, Lk. 4:18.

Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses.<sup>14</sup> This Mary was the Theotokos, the Mother of God, who, because she had been betrothed to Joseph, was called the "mother" of James and Joses, who were among Joseph's children by his first marriage. She was called "mother", meaning "step-mother", just as she was called Joseph's "wife", instead of, more precisely, his "betrothed". Salome was the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James and John. And there were many other women disciples present, but Mark mentions by name only the most prominent of them.

**42-47.** Now when the evening was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a noble counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and asked for the Body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the Body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a tomb which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid. While yet a servant of the law, the blessed Joseph recognized Christ as God, and this is why he dared to do such a praiseworthy deed of courage. For he did not stop to think to himself, "I am a wealthy man, and I will lose my wealth if I ask for the body of one condemned by the ruler's authority, and I will be slandered by the Jews." No such thoughts did he harbor, but placing all other considerations second, he begged to bury the Body of the One condemned. "Pilate wondered if He were already dead" for Pilate thought that Jesus would endure on the cross for a long time, as did the thieves. So he asked the centurion if Jesus had already died some time before. Joseph then took the Body, having bought linen, and when he had taken It down from the cross he wrapped It in the linen, and buried reverently that which was worthy of all reverence. For Joseph too was a disciple of Christ, and he knew that it was necessary to honor the Master. He was "noble",<sup>15</sup> that is, devout, pious, and blameless. And

he held the rank of "counsellor", a title which conferred duties of public service and responsibility; for the "counsellors" supervised the affairs of the marketplace, and danger often befell one holding this position because of the evildoings in the market. Let the wealthy, and those engaged in public business, heed that Joseph's high rank in no way hindered him from living a virtuous life. "Joseph" means "increase", and "Arimathea" means "taking hold of that". Let us be like Joseph, always increasing in virtue, and taking hold of that which is truly good. And let us also take the Body of Jesus, through Holy Communion, and place It in a tomb hewn out of a rock, that is, place It within a soul which always remembers God and does not forget Him.<sup>16</sup> And let that soul be hewn from a rock, that is, from Christ Who is the Rock on which we are established. And let us wrap the Body of Jesus in the linen, that is, let us receive It within a pure body. For the body is the linen and, as it were, the garment of the soul. For we must receive the divine Body of the Lord not only with a pure soul, but with a pure body as well. And we must wrap It and enfold It within ourselves, and not leave It exposed. For this Mystery is something veiled and hidden, not something to be exposed.

<sup>14</sup> In Greek, *euschēmōn*

<sup>15</sup> The Greek word for 'tomb', *mnēmeion*, is derived from the word *mnēmē*, which means 'memory'.

*Concerning the Resurrection of Christ.  
Those to whom the Lord appeared after His Resurrection.  
How He commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel.*

1-8. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the tomb at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the tomb; for they trembled and were amazed; neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. The women had no understanding of Christ's divinity while they sat by the tomb, and they bought myrrh with which to anoint His Body in accordance with the Jewish practice, so that it would remain fragrant and not begin to have the foul odor of decay. Myrrh also dries things out, and thus it absorbs the moisture of the body and preserves it from corruption. Thinking such thoughts as these, the women rose and came to the tomb "very early in the morning," or, as Matthew says, "after the sabbath,"<sup>1</sup> or, as Luke says, "at early dawn."<sup>2</sup> All four evangelists say, "On the first of the sabbath,"<sup>3</sup> meaning, on first day of the week (for "sabbath" was also the name they gave to the seven days of the week considered together, so that the "first day of the sabbath" meant Sunday). As the women approached the tomb, they

talked among themselves about who would roll away the stone. While they were thinking about this, the angel rolled away the stone without their noticing. Matthew says that the angel rolled away the stone after the women had come to the tomb.<sup>4</sup> On this point Mark is silent, because Matthew had already said who rolled away the stone. Do not be troubled that Matthew says that the angel was sitting on the stone, while Mark says that after they entered the tomb, the women saw the angel sitting on the right side. It is likely that they first saw the angel sitting on the stone outside the tomb, as Matthew says, and that he then went before them into the tomb, where they saw him again. Some say that the women mentioned by Matthew were not the same ones mentioned here by Mark. Mary Magdalene, however, was with all of them, as she was fervent and aflame with zeal. The angel who appeared to the women said, "Be not affrighted." First he takes away their fear, and then he announces to them the good tidings of the Resurrection. He calls Jesus "the Crucified", for the angel was not ashamed of the cross, which is the salvation of mankind and the beginning of good things. "He is risen." How do we know this? Because "He is not here." And do you want further assurance? "Behold the place where they laid Him." This is why the angel had moved away the stone, to show them the place. "But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter." He names Peter separately from the other disciples, as Peter was the foremost of the apostles. Also, because Peter had denied the Lord, the angel singles him out by name so that, when the women came and said that the Lord had commanded them to tell the disciples, Peter could not say, "I denied the Lord, and therefore I am no longer His disciple. He has rejected me and abhors me." The angel added the words, "and Peter," so that Peter would not be tempted to think that Jesus found him unworthy of mention, and unworthy to be ranked among the Lord's disciples, because of his denial. He sends them [out of Judea] into Galilee, delivering them from tumult and from their great fear of the Jews. Fear and amazement had taken hold of the women at the sight of the angel and at the awesome mystery of the Resurrection, and because of this "neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." Either they were afraid of the Jews, or they were so in awe of what they had seen that their minds were confounded. For this reason

<sup>1</sup> Mt. 28:1

<sup>2</sup> Lk. 24:1

<sup>3</sup> *mias Sabbatōn*

<sup>4</sup> Mt. 28:2

"neither said they any thing to any man," and they even forgot the command the angel had given them.

9-14. Now when Jesus was risen, early the first day of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen by her, believed not. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the others; neither believed they them. Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at table, and upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. "Now when Jesus was risen"—put a comma here, and then read—"early [in the morning]<sup>5</sup> the first day of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene." He did not rise in the early morning, for who saw when He arose? But He appeared in the early morning, on Sunday, the Lord's day, which is the first day of the week. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven, that is, many, demons. For in the Scriptures the number seven is used to indicate a large number. For example, "for the barren has born seven, and she that abounded in children has waxed feeble."<sup>6</sup> Also, the seven demons may mean the seven spirits that are opposed to virtue, such as the spirit of irreverence, the spirit of thickheadedness, the spirit of ignorance, the spirit of falsehood, and whatever else is opposed to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> After this Jesus appeared in a different form to the two disciples as they were walking. Luke also speaks of them.<sup>8</sup> And these two also "told it unto the others: neither believed they them." How is it that Luke says that when the two returned from Emmaus, they found the eleven gathered together, saying that the Lord was risen,<sup>9</sup> while Mark says here that

<sup>5</sup> The single word *proī* in the Greek text, translated as "early" in the KJV, refers to the very early morning hours, from about 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. by our reckoning.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings (1 Sam.) 2:5

<sup>7</sup> See Is. 11:2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Lk. 24:13-35

<sup>9</sup> Lk. 24:33-34

neither did they believe those who returned from the country. We say, therefore, that the phrase "they told it unto the others" refers not to the eleven apostles, but to certain others of Jesus' followers, whom Mark calls "the others". For the eleven had seen the Lord on the same day on which the two returned from Emmaus in the country and found the eleven saying, as Luke reports, "The Lord is risen."

15-20. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. See the Lord's commandment, "Preach to every creature." He did not say, "Preach to those who believe," but "to every creature," whether they give heed or not. It does not suffice one only to believe, but he must be baptized as well. He who believes, but has not yet been baptized and is still a catechumen, is not yet saved.<sup>10</sup> He says that signs shall follow those who believe, such as casting out demons, speaking in new tongues,<sup>11</sup> taking up serpents, that is, destroying them, namely, spiritual serpents, as in "He gave them power to tread on serpents and scorpions,"<sup>12</sup> referring to spiritual serpents and scorpions. But, "they shall take up serpents" can also be understood in the same manner in which Paul took the viper in his hand and was not harmed by it.<sup>13</sup> "And if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not harm them." Indeed, many such things have taken place, as

<sup>10</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "Therefore he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, if he preserves his faith and his baptism pure and spotless, or, if after staining them, he again purifies them [through repentance]."

<sup>11</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "that is, speaking in foreign languages."

<sup>12</sup> Lk. 10:19

<sup>13</sup> See Acts 28:1-6.

we find throughout the history of the Church. For many have drunk deadly potions, and then, by signing themselves with the cross, have been preserved unharmed. When the Lord had spoken these things, "He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God."<sup>14</sup> The apostles preached everywhere, "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." See that we must do our part first, and then follows God's collaboration with us. When we have acted and made a beginning, then the Lord works with us. The Lord cannot work with us if, by our own inaction, we give Him no way to do so. Consider this as well: after the word come works, and the word is confirmed by works, just as it was with the apostles then, when the works and the signs which followed confirmed the word. May it be also, O Christ the Word, that our words which we speak concerning virtue are confirmed by our labors and deeds. As ones perfected, may we stand by Thy side so that Thou mightest work with us in all our deeds and words. For unto Thee is due the glory of our words and deeds. Amen.

#### THE END OF THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK

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<sup>14</sup> A scholion in the Greek text adds: "Indeed God the Father, Who is bodiless, would not have a right or a left hand, as these are forms pertaining to bodies. Therefore, sitting signifies resting, and enjoying the kingdom of God. The right hand of God signifies the close relationship and equality of the Son to the Father. The Son is said not only to sit at the right hand of the Father, but also to stand, as Stephen said in the Book of Acts (Acts 7:56). That Christ 'sits', teaches us the permanence of the divine; that He 'stands', teaches us the divine readiness to do good. Thus the difference of expression conveys no contradiction in meaning. Also, when Stephen said that the Son was standing, he did not say that the Father was sitting, lest we think that there is a difference in rank between the Father and the Son. Therefore, He both sits and stands."